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THE following experimental and interesting Dialogues came into the Translator's possession some years back. At that time he had a *head* knowledge of the doctrines contained in them, but no *heart* acquaintance with the grace of those doctrines. This, working with the pride of nature, led to daring presumption, which would have precipitated his soul into the yawning gulph of eternal ruin, had not *mercy* prevented. But God was merciful; and, to the *conviction of sin*, added the gifts of *repentance* and *faith*, which, conducting to the cross of the Lord Jesus, begot in him a *living* hope, and eventually issued in the attainment of peace with a justly offended God. He can now subscribe to much of the experience, so faithfully and scripturally detailed in this excellent little Treatise; and being persuaded that it is a work pre-eminently fitted, as a means, under the divine blessing, to promote the increase and progress of *vital* religion, he humbly presents a translation of it to the public, praying that, wherever the providence of God may direct its course,

he will accompany it with the light and grace of his Holy Spirit, without which, Paul might have planted, and Apollos watered, *in vain*, 1 Cor. iii. 6.

The PHARISEE will find therein exposed the ruinous foundation he builds upon; and, that it is equally irrational as unscriptural, to rest the hope of immortality and glory, in any degree, upon the works of a creature, “conceived in sin, and shapen in wickedness,” Psal. li. 5.

The mere PROFESSOR will be shown (however well stored his *head* may be with the knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel), that knowledge, without grace, will not reach the heart, or impress upon the soul the image of the meek and lowly Jesus—a work inseparable from the new creation, and the only thing that renders it acceptable in the sight of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 4.

The AWAKENED SINNER, burthened with guilt, and labouring under the painful convictions of his deplorable and hopeless condition by nature; alarmed at the malediction of an infinitely holy law, which affords no hope to the guilty, will, in these Dialogues, find described the *saving* work of the Spirit, in his first operations upon the conscience, and will be led progressively, and, in the end, comfortably, into the experience “that judgment must first begin at the house of God,” 1 Pet. iv. 17; and thence to the blood of sprinkling,

which alone can speak pardon and peace to the guilty and condemned.

The BELIEVER will also meet with much interesting and instructive matter, respecting the causes of the weakness of faith, and occasional relapses into unbelief; together with the means pointed out, by which faith is established.

The last Dialogue treats of Sanctification, as being productive of a growing meetness for glory, and concludes with some observations respecting the Believer's transit from the cross to the crown, through the valley of the shadow of death.

In fine, this little Book, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, will be a valuable guide to those who are saying, "What shall I do to be saved?" and are truly in earnest about their eternal felicity. The Translator is induced to publish it in Monthly Numbers, being a mode more convenient to himself, and, at the same time, rendering the purchase of it easier to persons of limited means. It will, moreover, enable the reader to give the subjects treated of the deliberate and often resumed attention they merit and require. There are a few occasional notes by the Translator.

January 1st, 1838.

PREFACE

TO THE FRENCH EDITION.

GOD has a heart filled with the most tender love for mankind: he has not only created them in his own image, and heaped upon them the richest blessings, but, since they have been deprived of the happy innocence in which they were formed, he has not been weary of supporting them: he has made known to them his *determined design* to bring them back, by grace, to holiness and happiness; and “when the fulness of time was come, he sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,” Gal. iv. 45.

“God,” then, “has shown the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ,” Ephes. ii. 7; and he still manifests it by the multiplied cares which, without ceasing, he takes, in order that we should participate in the fruits of the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Divine Head, that is, to bring us to the salvation Jesus has merited for us.

Does any one inquire by what way God conducts souls to the enjoyment of the salvation and all the blessings which are in Christ? The following work will reply to this interesting question, and it is on that account entitled: "The Order of Evangelical Grace in the Economy of Salvation."

The Author is a divine equally distinguished for his intelligence as respectable for his piety—Mr. David Hollaz, pastor of the church of Gunthersberg, near Stargard in Pomerania, and son of the celebrated Doctor and Professor Hollaz, from whom we have a masterly system of Theology.

This little Treatise was first printed in Germany, at Stargard, in 1741. Since which it has gone through several editions in that country and in France, and has constantly obtained the approbation of enlightened persons, whom the wisdom of this world has not turned from the simplicity of the Gospel.

As to the edition now presented to the public, it is hoped that it will not experience a less favourable reception; as every care has been taken to render it more correct than the preceding ones, and, at the same time, to rid it of everything which added nothing to the author's sentiments, already clearly expressed, or to the edification which he had at heart to communicate.

May you, dear Reader, learn by this work, to

know yourself well; to become poor in spirit; to flee, under the sense of your miseries, to Jesus Christ by faith; to receive, freely, the pardon of your sins, grace and peace, the Spirit and life; to preserve with care the graces you have received; and to watch without ceasing, waiting till your heavenly Bridegroom shall come to perfect your deliverance and felicity.

But if you are desirous of attaining to this, remember the following admonitions:

First. Read it with a collected mind, and a heart truly willing to be made wise unto salvation.

Secondly. Frequently question yourself thus: Dost thou understand this? Dost thou sincerely believe that? Art thou such a man as here described? Thy heart, is it thus disposed? Hast thou experienced that? Dost thou truly desire to become so and so? Hast thou practised that? &c.

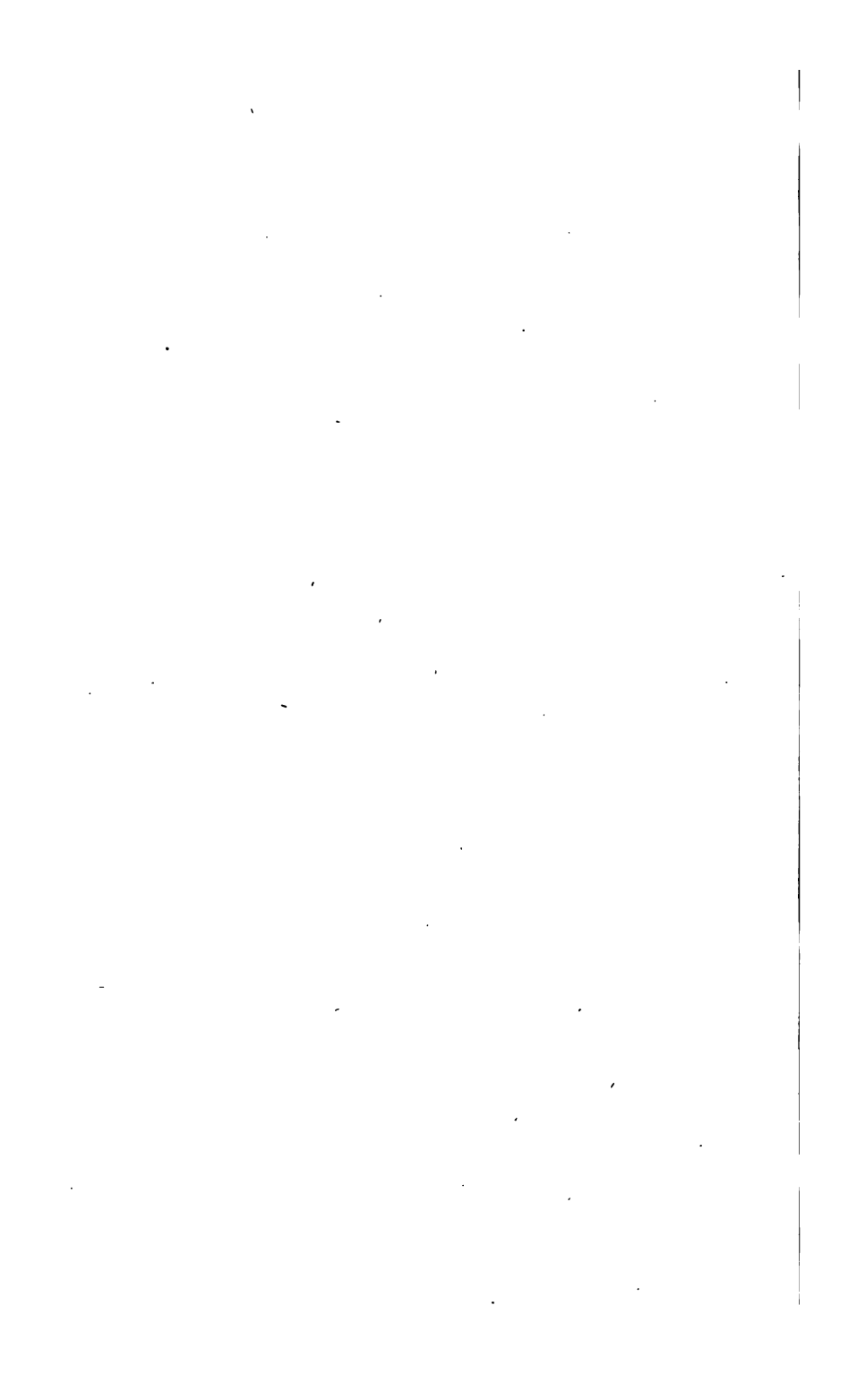
Thirdly. Read this book till you have well discovered these two things, namely, *what you want*, and the *means of obtaining it*. If the first reading does not sufficiently inform you, read it a second and third time, always imploring God for the light of his Spirit.

Fourthly. Do not resist the influences of the Holy Spirit, when he would convince you of the bad and dangerous condition in which you may find yourself; but suffer him to conduct you into a

deep and thorough knowledge of your misery, and every thing hitherto hidden from you, however strange, humbling, and painful it may be.

Finally. Take no repose till you can say, with perfect assurance, ‘Formerly, it is true, I was blind, unbelieving, dead in sin, a slave to Satan, rebellious against God, an enemy to my Saviour, and the most unworthy of all men; but the Lord has shown me mercy; has pardoned my sins, through his merit, blood, and death; and it is God’s will that I should “glory in nothing but Christ crucified:” by faith in him, I am clothed with a perfect righteousness, and animated by divine power.’ If, hereafter, you should be able to hold this language, you will then truly belong to Jesus Christ, and, after a happy death, will enter into his kingdom of glory. But, *without* this, you can have no part in him.

God grant that these truths may become, in your heart, a living and prolific seed, which may bear fruit to eternal life. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! Amen.



DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

Wherein is shewn in what manner false Professors, and such as glory in their goodness, must be stript of their own righteousness, and learn to know their misery by nature. "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 2—4.

IN these words the Apostle has particularly in view false professors, who, prepossessed in their own favour, and depending upon their own righteousness, pass lightly over *repentance* and *faith*, and pretend to save themselves by the performance of certain works of piety, as if it could be done out of the communion of Jesus Christ, and without their having need of the reconciliation made by his blood. In like manner, I purpose to address myself to those persons who, calling themselves good and religious people, and endeavouring to pass in the world as such, have never ex-

perienced in their souls the depth of their misery by nature, or any sincere desire produced by divine grace. It is intended to show them how delusive is the good opinion they entertain of themselves, and how much their vain self-sufficiency, with all its miserable assemblage of pretended good works, ought rather to cover them with confusion. It is not presumed that they are in possession of faith and godliness ; all that is expected of them is, that they will suffer themselves to be conducted into the knowledge of their corruption, and that they will not oppose the truth, or fortify themselves in their self-righteousness.

Pastor.—My dear friend, are you well assured of your salvation ?

Disciple.—Yes, without doubt; why should I not be saved ?

Pastor.—Have you then made a serious inquiry into that salvation on which you rely ? Do you remember the time and place wherein you wrestled with God, by prayer and tears, to obtain the forgiveness of your sins, and that, not with the mouth only and negligently, but with fervor and perseverance ? Have you experienced that solicitude and perplexity the soul is in when it fears being lost ; when one cries, “ Lord, save or I perish ! Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ” I am lost, my God, unless thou help me, Ho-

sea xii. 4. Answer me, and give a reason for the hope that is in you.

Disciple.—I pray to God night and morning; I read his word; I do no wrong to anybody, and I go regularly to church and the sacrament; so, I trust God will not reject me.

Pastor.—I have been solicitous for you every time I have thought of your condition. It is true, I have judged charitably of you, observing that you are not so disorderly or profane as many others; but, by the knowledge God has given me of his truth, I have also remarked, that your hope of salvation is the creation of your own imagination, and not the work of God in your soul; that in thus seeking in yourself a false support, you build upon a quicksand, and that in relying upon it, you run the risk of falling into perdition. In fact, it appears that you are yet a stranger to the corruption of your nature, and the poison of original sin with which the heart is infected; and also to the sovereign and only remedy for all our evils, which is the effectual grace of our Saviour, received by faith. Perhaps you will not credit what I say, but I feel myself constrained to declare it, and I am happy in having, to-day, an opportunity.

Disciple.—I believe, however, in the Lord Jesus, and I put my trust in him.

Pastor.—I wish your declaration was true and sincere ; but faith, and a firm confidence in the merits of the Saviour, are only found in a soul that deeply feels its great misery, and full of “godly sorrow,” 2 Cor. vii. 10, perceives its state of sin and condemnation. It is to such poor souls the grace of the Gospel is proclaimed. The Son of God is come “to comfort those that mourn, and to bind up the broken-hearted,” Isaiah lxi. 1- 3. Many persuade themselves that they shall be saved ; but when the foundation of their hope is examined, we discover that it rests upon the sand ; that it cannot stand against the assaults of the enemy, and that it vanishes, like a shadow, before the light of divine truth. One relies upon the decency of his outward conduct ; another upon the goodness of his disposition ; a third upon the regularity of his attendance upon the ordinances, being, as St. Paul says, “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless,” Phil. iii. 6 ; and because, in his own eyes, he is better than others, he thinks he has faith, and a sure hope of salvation. But what faith and hope can that be, which is not fixed upon Jesus Christ, but upon oneself ? True faith discovers to us our great misery and natural state of condemnation, conducts us to the Saviour, and unites us firmly to him, who is the propitiation for our sins, by his

blood ; and which operating by love to him, procures us an unmerited pardon, for his sake.* He who has obtained this grace, though he may live many years as a child of God, always remembers it is an unmerited grace he has received.

Disciple.—As for me, I know how to apply to myself the promises of the Gospel, and the grace of God.

Pastor.—If you have made that application with so much ease, without prayers, tears and groans, your assurance appears to me to be very suspicious : I fear, as I said before, it is the mere work of your own imagination. I must inform you that no one can, in his *own strength*, believe in the Lord Jesus, or draw nigh unto him : “ No man can come to me,” said he, “ except the Father draw him,” John vi. 44. Without this gracious attraction, and the conviction of his misery, under the malediction of the law, man remains cold and insensible ; or at most, makes

* It is plain the Author does not treat of faith, here, as being the *meritorious cause* of pardon, which is the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, to the utter exclusion of every thing besides. He speaks of it as a grace of the Holy Spirit, and the operative means by which the soul is made partaker of the pardon, already merited and obtained for sinners, and which is styled by the Apostle, “ Faith which worketh by love,” Gal. v. 6.

but ineffectual efforts; and certainly is, as yet, no partaker of the grace of God. It is for this reason St. Paul says, "Sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good, that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful," Rom. vii. 13. Besides, if you have not in you the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, and you are not seen following his steps in humility, love, meekness, and contempt of the world, it is a sign that your pretended state of grace is a mere illusion. You are one of those of whom the Saviour says, they "Receive the word with gladness, and have no root in themselves," Mark iv. 16, 17.

Disciple.—I cannot believe that I am in such a bad condition; I pray, I study to act properly, and knowing what it is to live as a Christian, I exhort others to do so, and rebuke them when they do wrong.

Pastor.—It appears that you entertain a good opinion of yourself; but you do not see that, in the eyes of the Lord, you are "Miserable and poor and blind and naked," Rev. iii. 17. Have you ever, in the course of your life, discovered with grief the total depravity of the heart of man; his blindness, impotency; the depth of unbelief, ingratitude, insensibility and coldness he naturally has towards his God, towards that good and com-

passionate Saviour who has purchased the salvation of a lost and wicked world at the price of his blood and life? Can you recollect the day, the moment, when as a poor leper you threw yourself at the feet of this Jesus, to implore life and the cure of your soul? Have you, indeed, experienced how efficacious his blood is to cleanse the heart, to blot out sin, to extinguish the impure flame of the passions, and to communicate a new life to the soul? If this language appear strange to you, or rather, if you have never felt its reality, I can consider you only as a man who knows not the Saviour, and consequently distant from salvation: for, you must know, that no one remains at a distance from the Saviour, but he who is ignorant of his misery. "Those who need the physician," who implore his help, and confide in him, "are they that are sick," Luke v. 31. He came to heal the sick, the blind, the leprous, the unclean, the sinful; that is, the wicked and ungodly, so that there are none but those who regard themselves as outcasts and lost that come and prostrate themselves before him, Isaiah xxvii. 13. The Church of Jesus Christ, his kingdom of grace upon earth, resembles closely that of David; "and every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves to him, and he

became Captain over them," 1 Sam. xxii. 2. This consciousness of our misery, which leads us to Jesus, is the only thing necessary ; but it is usually wanting in those who, from their youth, think they have " kept all the commandments," Mark x. 20, 21.

Disciple.—I have, nevertheless, a good heart ; it is to be wished that many others resembled me, and that there was no one more wicked than myself.

Pastor.—Your language is that of the greater part of natural men, and even of the avowed ungodly ; at the time that they make no scruple to curse, swear, lie, deceive and practise all kinds of wickedness, they flatter themselves that they have a good heart. It is, by far, the saddest and most dangerous state they can be in. On the contrary, the soul that the Saviour has visited by the light of his grace, immediately perceives how defiled, poor, and unworthy it is. A man that knows his own heart, thinks no one so bad as himself ; and the moment wherein he discovers his miserable condition, is precisely that in which it begins to amend, for he directly seeks a remedy for his miseries. The less a person is willing to be convinced of his corruption, the less he is able to get rid of it ; whilst the more he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and draws nigh to the Saviour, the

more also he discovers fresh spots, which he seeks to be cleansed from in the blood of the Lamb; and it is thus he is renewed, day by day, in the image of the Son of God. A pure heart is not one that is exempt from spots, but one which, perceiving them, hastens to Jesus, *who blots out the offence*. An impure heart, on the contrary, is that which presumes itself to be clean, when it is defiled. Solomon says, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness," Prov. xxx. 12. O! how great and deplorable is the blindness of men, and how many there be that resist the light of truth, the admonitions of their consciences, and the convictions of the Holy Spirit, to create for themselves a pleasing, but fatal illusion! "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John i. 8.

Disciple.—I can, however, say that I am different, at present, from what I formerly was.

Pastor.—What do you mean by that? Is it because your conduct is a little more decent than heretofore, that you do not swear or rob, and that you have reformed your outward behaviour? This change is praiseworthy, indeed, in the eyes of men; but you will experience a much greater alteration if ever you come to know your own heart thoroughly, and seriously flee to Jesus, by

faith. Although you should attain to the highest degree of virtue and devotion that man could arrive at, you would be obliged continually to descend into the dust, and become nothing, under the sense of your extreme misery and unworthiness.

Disciple.—I have known my misery a long time since, God be praised.

Pastor.—Perhaps you have known it, in some degree; but it is necessary you should sensibly and keenly feel it, in the bottom of your heart. The Prophet Jeremiah says: "Because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto the heart," Jer. iv. 18. True repentance, or contrition, is that self-abasement, mixed with confusion, and that bitter compunction, which a real sight and feeling of sin excites in the heart. As I perceive you are always inclined to justify, or rather to deceive yourself, it is proper that I should describe to you some particulars, by which you may judge whether you have a deep knowledge and real feeling of your misery or not. Observe, in the first place, if you still love sin. We love sin, when we excuse it, and find a secret pleasure in committing it, and when we do not abhor it, to the last degree. Secondly, if you have a good opinion of yourself, and are desirous of justifying yourself, instead of confessing that you are poor, naked;

and void of all good. Thirdly, if, instead of ardently sighing after the experience of the reconciliation Jesus has effected, you live contentedly under the dominion of sin, and the malediction of the law, and if you contemplate without emotion and shame what the Saviour of mankind has done and suffered for you ; his labours, griefs, agony, bloody sweat, his bleeding wounds and pierced side, his cries, sighs and tears which accompanied his death upon the cross. Do you recognize yourself in this description ? I must then declare to you, that you have not yet any experience of your misery, or of the grace of God. You are in a state of unbelief, impenitence and death. From the moment Jesus approaches a sinner, to open his eyes to his miserable condition, and draw him to himself, that sinner becomes a " new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. He has no more pleasure in committing sin, he detests it ; the propensity that draws him to it becomes an insupportable yoke, a grievous burden, a heavy chain, by which Satan holds him in slavery. The load of his corruption makes him sigh, groan, and cry to Jesus : " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " Rom. vii. 24. His soul is humbled, his heart is cast down ; every good opinion of himself, every self-righteous feeling, ceases and disappears from his eyes : great

but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return," Jer. v. 3. The truly penitent and contrite sinner, like the woman of Canaan, redoubles his importunities, until he has received pardon. You build upon some occasional good feelings, which is deceiving yourself. If you had been more faithful in preserving and following these first impressions, they would have led you to Jesus; you would have found him, and he would have received you.

Disciple.—Without doubt, one can do nothing better than to apply to Jesus Christ and supplicate him; and so I have ardently desired that he would grant me mercy.

Pastor.—So long as a sinner feels his malady he prays, but his importunity diminishes in proportion as he loses sight of it, and he often goes the length of throwing himself into worldly amusements in order to forget his pain and sorrow.

Disciple.—I perceive, however, that God blesses me, and prospers my affairs, which prove me to be an object of his grace and love.

Pastor.—These outward blessings only show that the Lord is willing to draw you to him by the cords of love, otherwise the satisfaction you feel in prosperity makes me suspect that you have, in your heart, a secret attachment for the goods of this life.

Disciple.—I have already had many crosses in my life ; I have been exposed to calumny, and even persecution. You know this is the lot of the children of God.

Pastor.—Do not call a cross those evils you have brought upon yourself by imprudence, caprice, or bad conduct. The real cross, which is the portion of true Christians upon earth, is what they suffer, not for having done evil, but for the love of Jesus, and in the same spirit of patience and resignation to the will of God the Father.

Disciple.—Notwithstanding, I can assure you, God has supported and visibly protected me from my enemies, an evident proof that my prayers have been acceptable to him.

Pastor.—In that, God has done for you what he does for many of the ungodly, whom he protects and preserves by his all-powerful providence in his kingdom of nature. If you reflect, perhaps, you will remember, that you have employed every means in your power to avoid those sufferings the wisdom of God had ordered for your good. When the Saviour burthens us with the cross, he gives us patience and strength to support it.

Disciple.—But after so long a profession of being a Christian, and having been considered such by others, is it possible that they and myself can be deceived ?

Pastor.—To appear so, in the eyes of the world, it is sufficient to have some knowledge, to abstain from gross sins, to lead a regular life, to perform the outward duties of worship, and to know how to talk religiously ; but it is not so easy to deceive the real children of God ; as spiritual men, they know how to judge of spiritual things. Having their senses exercised to discern good from evil, truth from falsehood, they perceive, in an instant, whether the foundation be solid, whether any other be laid save Jesus Christ, and whether a person be animated by his spirit or another.

Disciple.—Is it not, then, permitted us to apply to ourselves the grace of God, and manifest to others what is good in us ?

Pastor.—He only knows what grace is, who feels in his heart that he is a poor sinner; and unreservedly confesses it; and none other can apply to himself the grace of the Gospel but he who has received it, and experienced its efficacy. You will never hear the pardoned sinner make a parade of his good qualities; the hypocrite alone exalts his own righteousness, in order to stifle the reproofs of his conscience. The children of God seriously endeavour after sanctification,* but they

* It possibly may be objected by some, that, when any one receives the spirit of adoption, in regeneration, he is

glory only in the Lord Jesus Christ, in his cross, and the merits of his blood and death, Gal. vi. 14; Phil. iii.; Jer. ix. 23, 24. Every cause of self-glory is excluded in them who know they are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves, but by the free and unmerited gift of God; "not of works, lest any man should boast," Ephes. ii. 9. Besides, there is a great difference between a Pharisee who displays his pretended merits, in saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," &c. Luke xviii. 11; and a humble sincere Christian, who in the lowest self-abasement, says with St. Paul, "I am the chief of sinners; howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting," 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. A self-righteous man is always harsh and severe; but the child of God is compassionate and charitable towards all men, and especially towards poor afflicted sinners.

sanctified; but such should consider that, from that moment and not before, the Christian's warfare commences. It consists in daily putting off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and "in putting on the new man, which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 22, 24, and this is what the apostle Paul enjoins and calls "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

Disciple.—It seems that you desire to deprive me of my faith; nevertheless, it is not right that I should open my heart to unbelief and distrust.

Pastor.—My poor friend, I declare freely to you that I do not think you have faith. It does not even appear that you ever had any. It is indeed true that poor repentant sinners ought to shun unbelief and mistrust, because they have every thing to expect from the mercy of the Lord; but those who live in impenitence and security, ought not to arrogate to themselves a faith which they do not possess. A thorough knowledge and lively sense of his misery does not lead a man to distrust and despair; on the contrary, it is the salutary path by which the Holy Spirit usually conducts the sinner, through faith, to Jesus Christ. It is, then, unreasonable that you should object to enter this path, and to avoid it, you should attribute to yourself a faith which is only imaginary. Instead of thinking so advantageously of yourself, I would rather see you disquieted about your state, accusing, judging, and abandoning yourself to the influences of the Holy Spirit, in order that he might carry on his work in you.

Disciple.—Ah well! I am willing to submit myself entirely to the guidance of the Lord.

Pastor.—It is, without doubt, the best thing

you can do ; but then you must follow the road he leads, surrender your heart to him, without reserve, and sincerely implore his grace ; you must avail yourself of every means he affords, and avoid every thing that may tend to prevent or destroy his work in you.

Disciple.—If the good that is already in me goes for nothing—if, in reality, I am to consider it nothing, what is to become of me ?

Pastor.—You will become a poor sinner, whose pretended virtue and self-righteousness will cover him with confusion. You will discover yourself to be blind, and that you have lived in darkness and ignorant security as to what relates to your salvation ; one who has never seen or known Jesus the Saviour of the world, because, like the Jews, *a veil of unbelief* and self-righteousness has covered your eyes : you will discover yourself to be a paralytic that can neither act nor move by yourself ; a body of sin and death, destitute of the life of God, and of every feeling that can lead to him ; a leper, corrupt, defiled, impure in every part of your body, and every faculty of your soul ; and besides which, a man senseless enough to think he has a pure, upright, and good heart. In fine you will regard yourself as a lost man, who can find neither succour nor refuge in any creature, whether in heaven or earth. Then your

heart, sighing for deliverance, will turn towards "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29, who pardons, absolves, justifies, and saves the ungodly that believe in him, Rom. iv. 5. Then the Gospel of grace and reconciliation will be preached efficaciously to you, and you will taste and experience its divine and consoling virtue.

Disciple.—I begin to see that I have been deceived in the good opinion I have entertained of myself.

Pastor.—In truth, up to the present moment, you have thought yourself capable of some good; you have esteemed yourself to be wise and clear-sighted: therein you have "deceived yourself," 1 Cor. iii. 18, and because you say "you see, therefore your sin remaineth," John ix. 41. In order to draw you out of this delusion, it is necessary that the Saviour should confound your pretended wisdom, and convince you that your knowledge, capacity, and talents, are only folly and weakness, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. This, without doubt, will appear to you harsh and incomprehensible, but such is the good will of our God, and such are his gracious dealings; for what is that wisdom and knowledge, which does not proceed from sovereign eternal wisdom, and is not the production of the spirit of Jesus? It is only a mass of confused

ideas, vague opinions, and false decisions—the offspring of human reason—that reason which, when we have most cultivated, and carried it to its highest perfection, still remains an enemy to Jesus, and inspires us with nothing but feelings of aversion to and rebellion against him. You see, in yourself, that your opinions and reasonings have only produced in your heart, objections favourable to its natural opposition to the work of grace, Eph. ii. 3. To conclude, in a word, “God,” says the blessed Luther, “has never made a saint, whom he had not before rendered a miserable sinner.”

Disciple.—Yes, I see it; I must implore the grace of God.

Pastor.—You begin to follow the right way; but the first grace you should pray for, in your present situation, is the *experimental* knowledge of your misery. The good you have forced yourself, hitherto, to practise, instead of advancing you in the ways of salvation, has only served to estrange you more and more from them. In wrapping yourself up in your own righteousness, you have lost sight of your great corruption, and you have not perceived the necessity of fleeing to Jesus, that you might be washed in his blood, clothed with his merits, and transformed into a new creature. In fact, what are the works of

righteousness, the deeds of charity, with which you would cover your nakedness, before God and his children? Poor party-coloured rags, badly put together, which cannot hide your misery and corruption, and in the day of judgment will be consumed in the fire of divine justice.

Disciple.—I hope, however, that God, who is the Father of mercies, will have pity on me.

Pastor.—Without doubt, he will have pity on you: but the first act of his mercy towards you, will be to let you feel how miserable a sinner you are. If you do not resist * this first act of grace, he will bestow upon you a second, which will be to give you faith to believe that you are redeemed by Jesus Christ, that he is your ransom, and that you belong to him, and are his property, to the exclusion of every other master. When you are enlightened, you will perceive how great your blindness has been; which will be discovered to you the moment you sincerely desire, and earnestly implore it. The Father of mercies will teach you by his Spirit, what you are, and at the same time manifest to you, by faith, his divine Son Jesus, with all the treasures procured and intended for you, in him. Then you will be able to say, with truth, that you are a partaker of the

* This is scriptural language.—See Acts vii. 51, and 1 Thess. v. 19.

light and grace of your God ; for the work of his grace in us is to make us hate sin, and love our Saviour.

Soon as known, we to ourselves are vile,
 Abhor sin's very name,
 Adore the Saviour, court his smile,
 To ease us of our pain.

Disciple.—How can I obtain a knowledge of my misery ?

Pastor.—"The Lord opens the eyes of the blind ;" pray him to "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve," Rev. iii. 18, that is, to give you to see, clearly, how great your corruption is. Set apart a portion of time every day, to examine yourself, and pour out your soul in his presence. Dissipation and continued worldly occupation, are great obstacles to our salvation, because in such engagements, the soul is captive to, and engrossed by material objects. The continual noise of visible things impose silence upon the conscience ; its motions, its admonitions, its remorse, are not attended to. While this turmoil continues, the attractions of preventing grace have no hold upon the heart : the work of the Holy Spirit meets only with resistance ; the good seed of the word of life is stifled ; * we forget God, and lose sight of the salvation of our souls. This sort of trance,

* See Matt. xiii. 7.

accompanied by insensibility, is the cause of the profound security, in which so many poor creatures live, and is called in Scripture *spiritual death*.

You can contribute nothing towards the work of your conversion and salvation, but it depends upon yourself to use the assistance and means the Lord provides. Read and listen attentively to the word of God, and such books as are founded upon it. Attend to meditation and prayer; above all to the prayer of the heart, without considering a form of expression, and without attaching yourself to the words of others: adore God in Jesus Christ, and make known to him, with simplicity, your misery and the extreme need you have of his grace. If you sincerely enter upon this salutary career, the Saviour, who calls you to it, will soon meet you in it, and send into your heart the Spirit of truth to enlighten and conduct you. When he is come, "he will convince you of sin," for that is his first operation, 1 John xvi. 8. By his light you will see yourself, in the glass of God's law, such as you are; you will discover yourself to be a dissembler, and guilty in every respect. You will say, 'I am an Atheist; I have lived without God and without hope in the world. I am an Idolater, in giving to the crea-

tures the love and confidence which are only due to my God; I have even been my own idol, in referring every thing to myself, in loving and esteeming myself, and in expecting to be esteemed by others, as though I were better than they. I have often profaned the name of God in making use of it to cover the falsity and deceit of my heart. I have rejected and despised the word of God, not only in being contented to have in my head an historical knowledge of it, while I internally resisted the virtue of the Holy Spirit, who would have made it life, and rendered it efficacious in my heart; but also in giving to certain passages of the Scripture, which condemned me, a false interpretation, favourable to my sinful propensities. I am a prodigal child, who after having dissipated the benefits of my God, and rejected the salutary yoke of my Saviour, have refused to return to him, as a poor sinner, to implore his pardon. I am a Cain, who have pretended, by my fruits, my self-righteous works, to offer to God sacrifices meritorious and well pleasing to him; I have been the murderer of my brother, in contributing, by my sins, to the death of the Son of God, and in crucifying afresh the Lord of glory, by my ingratitude and indifference towards him who hath loved me more than his

life. I have also imitated Cain in hating, condemning, and representing as fanatics persons who, stripping themselves of their own righteousness to be clothed with that of Jesus, present nothing but their misery to God, on account of which they supplicate his compassion, and an application of the merits of the Lamb, that they may obtain mercy. I have been an Ishmael, wild and cruel, "whose hand has been against every man," Gen. xvi. 12; for my heart has been full of anger, hatred, envy and animosity: a secret fornicator, an adulterer, who covered with a decent outside, the filthy desires and impure inclinations of my carnal nature: an unjust plunderer of the property of another in robbing God of the homage and gratitude I owe him, for all I am, and all I possess; in appropriating to myself the honour and glory that belong only to him, and in taking to myself, by unlawful means, the goods of my neighbour. I have been a false witness in disguising the truth; a false prophet in endeavouring to pass for righteous and holy, when, at the same time, I was nothing less; an hypocritical pharisee, in pretending to become righteous by the performance of the works of the law, and in rejecting the righteousness Jesus bestows unmeritedly upon sinners who believe in him. In fine, I am a

child of perdition, a vile sinner, lost and condemned.*

Behold, in substance, the confession you will make, in heart and mouth, when your eyes are open, and you perceive your misery. Do you recognize yourself in this description? Does the voice of your conscience convince you of being so great a sinner?

Disciple.—Alas! it is too true, and it is enough to make me tremble.

Pastor.—This is not all. The law will show

* The sorrowful and trembling seeker after Jesus will no doubt be discouraged at this description of the opinion he will form of himself, when the Holy Spirit discovers to him what he really is in the eye of the law of God. But let him gather consolation in meditating upon the following words of the son of Sirach: "Wisdom exalteth her children and layeth hold of them that seek her. He that loveth her loveth life, and they that seek to her early shall be filled with joy. He that holdeth her fast shall inherit glory, and wheresoever she entereth the Lord will bless. They that serve her shall minister to the Holy One, and them that love her, the Lord doth love. Whoso giveth ear unto her shall judge the nations, and he that attendeth unto her shall dwell securely. If a man commit himself unto her, he shall inherit her, and his generation shall hold her in possession. For at first she will walk with him in crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him and comfort him, and shew him her secrets." Eccles. iv. 11—18.

you that you are a dissembler: but it is in the Gospel, and in particular in the contemplation of Jesus crucified, of the Son of God suffering and dying, that you will learn how great a sinner you are, and what you merit as such. When you read the history of the blind, the lame, the paralytic, the leprous, and the many other sick the Saviour deigned to make whole, and particularly of the sinners who found grace in his eyes, say to yourself, *Thou art the man*. If you do not thus apply the word of God, the reading of it will not produce in you any good effect. Those who force themselves to become, what they think, righteous and holy, before they have well probed the malady of their hearts, uselessly torment themselves; they may succeed, perhaps, in avoiding gross sins, and in the practice of certain external duties, but in so doing they only assume a mask which may impose upon short-sighted men, and hide from themselves their inward corruption, so that they will not go to Jesus for justification and salvation by grace. To them apply these words of our Lord: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John v. 39, 40.

Consider, above all things, the sufferings and death of the Son of God, and remember that your

sins were the cause of them. Contemplate this man of sorrow; what humility, what abasement, what silence, what meekness, what love for his most cruel enemies! With all your goodness, what are you compared to him? A proud, presumptuous, detestable being, a demon. You have studied to be virtuous and pious, but only in appearance, that you might enjoy, in the world, the reputation of a good man. The Lord Jesus has not, among men, greater enemies than the pharisees, those self-righteous people, to whom the Gospel is a scandal.

A mantle, for our souls to prize,
Of our own merits wrought,
The Lamb of God, we do despise
And set his blood at naught.

Cast your eyes upon the saint of saints; he has been numbered with malefactors; dare you deny yourself to be one also? Ah! fix your attention for a time upon the cross of Jesus, you will there discover your extreme misery, and the extensive demands and infinite holiness of that law, the violations of which could only be expiated by the blood of God. You will say, with bitterness, how great has been my rashness in committing, without scruple, so many sins, which have caused the death of Jesus? What carelessness, what in-

gratitude! He died for me, and I have lived so long without loving him, without having recourse to his grace; and I have presumed, in contempt of his perfect righteousness, to depend upon my own pretended good works. To attempt to lay the foundation of justification upon sanctification, is to pervert faith; as if it was in consideration of our good conduct that God imputed to us the merits of Christ; or, as if it was on account of his merits that he has regard to our good works. It is thus the order and economy of salvation is reversed, in depending upon our own works, or in only having recourse to the merits of Christ to make up their deficiency. The true believer receives the imputation of the merits of Jesus Christ, under a deep sense of his misery, poverty, and urgent necessities, and at the same time renounces every thing that can be called sin. He knows that Jesus is the author and source, the beginning and the end of our salvation, and of all our holiness. Before we have received reconciling grace, we are neither happy, holy, or capable of any good; we are only happy and holy so long as we continue by faith in the enjoyment of his grace, and persevere in a sincere and close union of heart with him.

In fine, reflect that all your sins, even those committed against your neighbour, are so many

offences and injuries done to God, to him, who is goodness and love itself, your Creator, your preserver, and your Saviour. Is it thus you repay so many favours, received daily from his bountiful hand, so many attractions of his grace, so many proofs of his love? Your heart must be harder than a stone, if it is not affected even unto tears.

Disciple.—My God, make me know what, hitherto, I have been so unhappily ignorant of.

Pastor.—If you would thoroughly know the extent of your misery, do not stop simply at the outward acts of sin, but penetrate into the source of them, which is the heart. You will there discover a secret enmity against God, a fund of in-oredulity, evil and corruption, that surpasses every idea. There you will find an abyss, impossible to fathom. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” Jer. xvii. 9, 10. What crooked ways, what hidden folds in this perfidious heart! Lord say, as at the beginning, “Let there be light.” On your part, apply yourself to observe every motion of your heart. It is from the neglect of this duty, that you have not hitherto known yourself. Solomon says, “he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,” Prov. xxviii. 26. “Bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors,” Isaiah xli. 8. Try, for a day, to watch your heart, and suffer no

thought to escape without examination. You will be struck with horror and astonishment, at the sight of the abominable things which proceed out of it. The heart of man, before it is renewed by grace, is a den of serpents, a receptacle of impure and diabolical thoughts, which we endeavour to hide, under a veil of false excuses, flattery, and dissimulation. Thus the natural man, when his conscience convinces him of sin, pardons freely in himself the greatest crimes. They are, in his eyes, only imperfections and weaknesses which are common to him, with every other person, and under this pretext, he makes no scruple of living in sin, and in shutting his eyes against the truth.

The reason why so few people come to a knowledge of their corruption, is the ignorance which, like *Egyptian darkness*, covers their hearts. So, we ought to consider that which enlightens men in the present life, to be the greatest act of grace. History furnishes many examples of persons who, by the just and merciful judgment of God, have fallen into the commission of the greatest sins; and by such means, have been undeceived as to the false and dangerous notion they entertained of their own goodness.

Disciple.—I tremble at what you tell me; I fear, lest in the serious consideration of it, I

should fall into despair; and you know despair leads to destruction.

Pastor.—It is the cunning of Satan to endeavour to alarm men, in order to prevent their inquiring into their real state; but a person sincerely and truly penitent, will not fall into this snare of the enemy. If he despairs, it is not of the grace of God, but of himself; and in measure that he loses all confidence in his own strength and good works, he entirely abandons himself to the grace of God, and places his confidence in him. It is true, this change is at the expense of nature, but this is a reason why we ought not to shut our ears to the voice that informs us of our lost condition. On the contrary, we ought to be more attentive to it, and pray the Lord to render his word efficacious in manifesting to us, the depth of our misery. Suppose a man to be in such circumstances, that he believes himself to be lost and under condemnation. If in that state he can supplicate for pardon, I am persuaded the Lord Jesus will draw nigh to him, and console him with these words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." This is the moment of grace: he who sighs and groans after it, will certainly obtain deliverance: he that would preserve *his own life*, his own strength, virtue, and interests, will lose all; but he who consents to be stripped of every

thing, and considers himself a lost creature, will recover all in him who is the Saviour of sinners. Yes, my friend, you must confess for once, that you are a sinner, and as such under condemnation; then you may also believe that Jesus has redeemed you. These are two truths that you must acknowledge and firmly believe, in order to be saved. You cannot believe the *second*, without being persuaded of the *first*. You must begin with this confession:—

A wretched slave to Satan's power,
Dead, plung'd in an abyss of sin,
My conscience, each revolving hour,
Reproach'd me with my guilt within.

A victim to his tyrant rage,
Lower and lower yet I fell;
A captive in an iron cage;
My anguish I alone can tell.

My good deeds, formerly my pride and boast,
I now perceiv'd a dream and vain;
My heart, the seat of enmity and lust,
Oppress'd my soul with grief and pain.

Despair, ah, now remain'd to me,
Where'er, alarm'd, my eyes I threw,
Indignation made me flee,
And wrath's dread doom appear'd in view.

After which you may presume to add—

But my God, whose compassions flow
E'en like a stream that knows no bound,
Toward me turn'd, and beheld my woe—
In his paternal bosom found

A balm to heal my misery ;
 Mercy and justice were combin'd,
 When Jesus liv'd and died for me—
 My Father's Son, my Brother kind.

But it too often happens, when God knocks at the door of our heart, and sends into it a sense of grief and fear, to convince us of sin, we immediately reject the conviction ; we betake ourselves to reading, praying, singing psalms or hymns ; we go more regularly to church, and the communion table ; we perform various acts of worship ; we practise good works. Why is all this ? In order to persuade ourselves that we are not so bad as our conscience accuses us of being, and that the spirit, which convinces us of sin, is not the Holy Spirit, but the tempter, who desires to drive us to melancholy and despair. Not but it is always right to pray and praise God, but it should be done with a heart contrite, and wounded with compunction. “ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces,” Dan. ix. 7 : it is under this conviction, that we should pray and sing psalms. God declares that we are sinners—sinners totally corrupt, who merit nothing but condemnation. Therefore, when we refuse to acknowledge ourselves to be such, we make God a liar ; but when we confess our sins, God is found just in his word, alone true, and every man

a liar, Gal. iii. 22; Rom. iii. 4; 1 John i. 10; Jer. ii. 29. 35; Psalm li. 5. How do we justify and give glory to God? Luke vii. 29, first when we confess ourselves to be sinners; secondly, when we believe that it is only by the grace of the Lord Jesus, that we can be justified, and made happy, Acts xv. 11; Heb. xi. 7; and, lastly, when we let the light and grace of God that is in us, shine before men, Matt. v. 16.

Disciple.—Ah Lord! it is indeed truth, I am a poor sinner.

Pastor.—Many people say so, but few truly feel it. Man, in his natural state, is doubly miserable: he is *defiled* with sin, and under *condemnation*. Full of enmity, incapable of any good, destitute of grace, groaning under the malediction of the law, he knows not what is come to him. Sin o'erwhelms him, his conscience accuses him. Such is the portrait of a man in a state of unbelief; such is yours, my friend.*

* This representation relates to the experience of a natural man, when awakened by the *powerful convictions* and *illuminations* of the Holy Spirit, in his application of the spirituality of the law to the conscience; and those, who have been in such case, will readily subscribe to its truth. Man, in his state of nature, *unimpressed with divine conviction*, is totally a stranger to the malediction of the law, and although living under its curse, is ignorant of the perplexity and dismay, a dread of its sentence, occasions to the soul, Rom. vii. 9.

In the first place, you are *defiled with sin*, which is in you. Your heart is corrupt, your soul is clothed with the image of Satan. Like him you are full of pride, hatred, covetousness, uncleanness, and vanity. With what promptitude do you not submit to these vices? with what strength do they not reign in you? Behold what you are, and what you will remain, until you seek deliverance, by faith, in Jesus. Acknowledge, then, how much Satan has deceived you up to the present moment. Often he will permit us to be delivered from six chains, provided he can hold us captive in the seventh. And nevertheless, you imagine yourself to be righteous and good, because your conduct is not so criminal as formerly, or as that of such and such persons of your acquaintance. But you are not the less the slave of Satan on that account. You are not a fornicator or revengeful; but you are covetous or worldly-minded; or if avarice does not reign in you, perhaps pride or some other vice does, and that deprives you of the image of Jesus, leaves you without faith in, and love to the Lord, cold and indifferent towards him.

Not only you are *defiled by sin*, which is in you, but you are also under *condemnation* on account of it—it makes part of your misery.

For which reason you perceive yourself to be far from the grace of God, void of love, confidence, and gratitude; disquieted and tormented in your conscience, without the enjoyment of peace and happy communion with him. How many years have you lived in this sad and dangerous state, that every day and every hour you seem as upon the brink of an abyss, and the bed on which you lie, every night, is only a place of inquietude and torment! Nevertheless, for some time past you might have enjoyed the happiness you want; more than once it has been proclaimed and offered to you,* but you have always more and more drawn back from your God. See what a poor creature you are! the less you perceive it, the more miserable you are. If you were truly to consider all this, your heart would bleed, and your tears would flow night and day. Ah, what happy effects would this godly sorrow produce! How many complaints and accusations you would make against yourself! With what bitterness you would deplore the stupidity of your heart for not having sooner obeyed the call of the Gospel! In the name of God, do not hold out any longer against the convictions of your conscience, but confess that all your pretended goodness and devotion are

* "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28.

incapable of sustaining or tranquilizing your perturbed soul. Even suppose you could, in your own strength, lead an irreproachable life for the future, your old debts would not on that account be cancelled; your former sins for these twenty, forty, sixty years, would still remain—your simple repentance would not efface them. These sins, which are still yours, merit the wrath of God—the avenger of iniquity. Your good works can neither expiate your sins, nor cancel your debts towards God; for it is written, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” Isa. lxiv. 6. Be assured, then, that without the atonement made by Jesus Christ, you must remain under condemnation “till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,” Matt. v. 26; that is to say, for ever. It is the Saviour who must first pardon your sins, and afterwards heal your infirmities, Ps. cxiii. 3.

Disciple.—I can, however, assure you, that when I first determined to become godly, I well considered that I had need of the grace of God, and I have often prayed for the gifts of piety, humility, and meekness.

Pastor.—You have formed a wrong idea of grace. Grace teaches us, in the first place, to know our extreme misery and sinful state, in order that we may renounce it; afterwards it disposes us to flee to the Lord Jesus by faith, to obtain

from him the pardon of, and deliverance from sin. Without this grace, it is impossible to arrive at true and solid piety. But as you have entertained a false idea of it, you have not been able to profit by what it teaches, and on that account, your prayers could not be favourably received; for without repentance and faith, you cannot be acceptable to God.

You have, then, great need to pray to the Lord, that he may grant you a thorough knowledge of your misery, the gift of faith, and the forgiveness of your sins. But it is also necessary that you should wait patiently the moment of grace, and be vigilant to preserve and rightly employ his gifts, before you can prove your fidelity to him, by studying to live properly. You must, before every other thing, experience "justification by the blood of Jesus," Rom. v. 9. Learn to humble yourself, for it is after humility that you will be able to bear witness that joy follows sorrow, and that exaltation is the fruit of annihilation.* "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," Luke xiv. 11.

It is the economy of grace to humble us, as poor sinners, at the feet of Jesus; and thus we become lowly and faithful sheep, and followers of the good Shepherd.

* See Rom. vii. 9—11.

Disciple.—I am persuaded of the truth of all you have said, and I begin to feel my nothingness; but I have yet a doubt—is it not possible to be pious, previously to our being conscious of our misery, and believing in Jesus Christ? Before that, *must* we live in vice and impiety? It is what I cannot believe; and if it were so, many persons would abuse such a doctrine.

Pastor.—I will reply to your objection, by observing, *first*, that every man, however impenitent and faithless he may yet be, can and ought to live a life morally good, that is to say, externally decent and virtuous. Here the law opposes a barrier to a torrent of vice, and when it is broken through, the magistrate is ready to punish the transgressor. But very much is wanting to make this external moral goodness, real piety: it is only the appearance of piety, it is a body without a soul. I must tell you, *secondly*, that we cannot expect an unconverted man, who has not received the grace of God, to live piously, because it is impossible; and should he endeavour, with all his strength, to do so, all he might attain to of himself, would still be sin, because not proceeding from faith. Thus, when an unconverted man desires to seek salvation, the first lesson he should attend to, the first maxim he should follow, is this: *learn to know thy misery*; and as thou

canst not acquire this knowledge without grace, pray the Lord with all thine heart, constantly and unremittingly, that he would let thee know and feel thy corruption. From the moment a man begins to discover his profound misery, he also commences to lose his taste for sin, and to have an aversion to ungodliness. To which I must add, that it is not my intention to reject or despise godliness, when it is the production of faith; but we should never reverse the economy of grace. The *poor*—poor sinners, compose the first rank of happy men, Matt. v. 3.

It is necessary, then, to repent sincerely of our sins and iniquities, and to be converted from them, by being grounded by faith upon Jesus Christ, as upon the only and immoveable *rock of salvation*. Then we have a foundation on which, we may build a religious life and Christian behaviour, Luke vi. 48. It is thus, St. Paul establishes for a foundation, “repentance from dead works,” and consequently, “faith in Jesus Christ,” Heb. vi. 1. “For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor. iii. 11. See how the Apostle describes the chain of salvation: the Lord Jesus, says he, is made unto us *wisdom*, that we may know the depth of our misery, and the magnitude of his grace; *righteousness*, that we may lay hold upon

his merits; *sanctification*, that we may learn to follow his steps in true holiness of life, in continually crucifying the deeds of the flesh; and *redemption*, that after having proved faithful, we may be delivered from all evil, and, through a happy death, enter into his eternal kingdom. But, alas! men have an aversion, almost unconquerable, to this knowledge of their misery. The greater part say, like the unjust steward, "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed." They do but slightly glance into the interior of the heart instead of fathoming it, and penetrating into its inmost recesses, that they may acknowledge the truth of the words of Ezekiel, chap. viii. We are unhappily disposed to confess ourselves debtors for only fifty pieces, when we owe an hundred, that is to say, palliate our vices and conceal part of our sins; and we are ashamed to beg, that is, to implore the grace of God, as poor unworthy sinners.

Disciple.—Have the goodness to quote some passages in Scripture, which speak against self-righteousness and false piety.

Pastor.—Very willingly: you have only to read St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, wherein he censures those who insist upon works before justification. According to him, works truly good are the fruit of faith, and follow

justification ; for which reason, he rejects the pretended good works of the Jews, and calls them sinful. Read also, *Isaiah* *lv.* 2, wherein the Lord says, "wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" As if he had said, why do you pretend to merit grace by your works? The works of the law and all your efforts united, cannot supply what your poor souls want, or extricate them from misery; you will remain for ever *blind, miserable, and naked*, if you do not, as weak and unworthy sinners, receive grace and mercy from Jesus your Redeemer and Saviour, who freely grants the pardon of sins. The Lord says, by the mouth of the same prophet, "yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as a nation that *did righteousness*," *Isa.* *lviii.* 2. Observe, in the preceding chapter, he had said; "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way, yet saidest thou not there is no hope," *Isa.* *lvii.* 10. In the 59th chapter, 6th verse, he again says, "their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works;" that is to say, how can man *live* before God? The performance of the deeds of the law cannot sustain or cover him in the sight of the Lord; it is a spider's web, which cannot hide his shame and nakedness. The Prophet Jeremiah holds the

same language : "truly in vain is salvation hoped from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains ; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. We lie down in our shame and our confusion covereth us, for we have sinned against the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 23, 24. St. Paul speaks to the same effect in several places of his writings ; among others, in his Epistle to the Romans (ix. 16), wherein he declares, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Righteousness and salvation, he would say, come not by your will, nor by your endeavours, nor by your works or amendment, nor by all you can do to expiate your sins ; but they are the *gifts* of that grace, which manifests itself in the reconciliation wrought out by Jesus Christ.

It is absurd, then, to require unconverted persons to do this or that, to live in such a manner, and to perform deeds of piety. It is expecting a dead body to live and act. There is no less absurdity in saying to people of this description,—It is necessary you should be quite different from what you are ; correct such and such a vice ; practise such and such a virtue, &c. All this is useless, because man cannot of *himself* break the chains which hold him captive under the law of sin. All that he can do is to drag himself, in his chains,*

* See Isaiah xlv. 14.

to the feet of Jesus, and cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, set me free, deliver me from this *body of death*; Lord, save me, or I perish! It is indeed true that the law says to us, thou shalt do this, and abstain from that; but the end of such commandments is to convince us of our impotency, and conduct us to the Saviour, that we may say to him, Lord, I can do nothing of myself; assist me; "turn thou me and I shall be turned," Jer. xxxi. 18. Then the grace of the Gospel will come to our aid, to give us faith, inclination, the will and the power to live soberly, righteously, and godly, Tit. ii. 12; 1 Peter xvi.

If you are desirous of other testimony than the word of God affords, you can consult the pious works of many of the Divines of the Protestant Church. If you read *Mead's* treatise on "The Almost Christian Discovered," it will show you how far a person may, by his natural efforts, carry the external duties of Christianity. The natural man, he says, may have very extensive knowledge and wonderful talents; he may go so far as to touch and awaken the consciences of others; he may be an undaunted witness for the truth, and even a martyr for religion. You will see him hate many vices that are contrary to his temperament; correct and amend himself in many respects; feel, from time to time, motions of grace, love what is good,

be zealous, pray constantly and devoutly, possess a sort of faith, that is to say, have a lively persuasion of the truth, and even surpass, in many external good works, those who are really converted, and in a state of grace. And with all this, the man is nothing more than an honest heathen, or, if we may use the expression, an Almost Christian. The same author informs you, that the *first* real operation of divine grace in the heart, is a deep conviction of our sinful state and profound misery, accompanied by a lively feeling on account of it. This conviction is the *touchstone* by which the work of grace is distinguished from that of hypocritical nature. To commit sin, says Mead, is the worst of all things; but to see sin in ourselves is the best discovery we can make. When a man, says he again, is only desirous of freeing himself from the reproaches of his conscience, and in order to quiet it, endeavours to perform various duties, he may attain to a conscience humanly and naturally good; but to give peace to the conscience, nothing less will suffice than the sprinkling of the blood of Christ: thus, when he approaches the Saviour, and pours out his heart before him, in sighs and groans, until he has obtained the grace he implores, then he has a heart truly purified and renewed. In another place, the same author remarks, that we must go as poor sinners to Jesus,

who became poor and stripped himself of his own glory, in order that we may be washed "in the blood of the Lamb slain for us." He adds, the reason why so many persons delude themselves is, that the heart of man is naturally deceitful. On which account the law does not admit any one to be judge and witness in his own cause.*

This doctrine is the same the blessed Luther constantly teaches in all his writings. In his Commentaries on the Book of Genesis, chap. 15, he says, "All other sins, such as anger, impatience, drunkenness, &c. are naturally so disgraceful, that all reasonable men are ashamed of them, because they are aware they sin in abandoning themselves to them; but self-confidence and esteem, the advantageous idea one has of his wisdom, virtue, and pretended piety, are those qualities which, like the Pharisee in the Gospel, they cannot acknowledge and avow to be sinful; they are even gloried in as gifts of the Spirit of God. This is truly a spiritual leprosy, a desperate malady, and almost incurable." Observe, likewise, what he says in the sixth volume of his works, printed at Jena, page 42; "When my faith is pure and exempt from hypocrisy, it does not fix or settle

* The author does not quote literally from Mr. Mead's excellent Treatise, but the matter produced may be found therein.

upon myself, nor upon my works, as if, on account of them, God should be gracious and propitious to me; no, this is rather the property of a false and hypocritical faith. The Pharisee associates the grace of God with his own merits; and although he may have the word of Christ in his mouth; his heart, not the less, trusts in itself. It is a patched-up piety, destitute of foundation, and built upon the sand. It must fall into ruin, with the pretended faith which upholds it." Further on he says, "If proof be necessary, it will be soon seen how difficult it is for a man of good works to strip himself of all self-righteousness, and as a poor naked sinner to seek grace at the feet of Jesus, by a lively faith, and an entire dependance of heart upon him. For these twenty years that I have been preaching against self-righteousness, it should seem that I ought myself to be entirely free from it; nevertheless, I constantly feel that I am not yet quite exempt from this spot. I should take pleasure in being able to carry anything to God, that he might be gracious to me on account of my holiness. On the other hand, it yet costs much to my carnal nature to abandon myself entirely to his unmerited grace. It is, and must remain true, however, that we must necessarily come to this."

In his explanation of the 21st chapter of

Genesis, he says, "Men do not become children and heirs of God, but in proportion as they grow into humility, and despair of themselves, so that they solely seek consolation and support in Jesus Christ. Yet many there are who refuse to humble themselves, and who kick and murmur against those who endeavour to lead them into a salutary self-abasement: these are doubly hardened." To these passages may be joined the remarkable words of the same author, who says, in the sixth volume of his works, page 40, "God has established two tribunals for men: *a tribunal of judgment* for the proud, who, living in security, will neither be convinced of nor confess their sins; and *a tribunal of grace* for poor and fearful souls, who, feeling and confessing their sins, tremble before his judgment, and pine after his grace. This tribunal is Jesus Christ: it is to this I appeal, and to this I will hold."

Disciple (now the awakened sinner.)—God be praised! I am sensibly penetrated with all the truths you have instructed me in.

And feeling myself a *sinner* to be,
No longer will I stop or delay,
My holiness, my sins, my misery,
At thy feet, dear Saviour, to lay.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND.

“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts iv. 12.

IN this second Dialogue we have chiefly in view those weak and distressed persons who consider themselves lost creatures; and being cast down under a sense of their impotency, after many unsuccessful efforts to overcome evil, and practise what is right, faint and lose courage. We likewise address ourselves to those souls who desire to have faith, and are anxious to live a godly life and be happy, but do not know how to attain to it; also to those who dare not receive the Gospel, or apply to themselves the benefits it offers, so unworthy do they feel themselves of the grace promised to them that believe: in general, the instruction contained in it has respect to all those who think the magnitude of their sins surpasses that of the grace of God.

The misery of every one of these arises from their being yet *under the law*, that is to say, they would convert themselves, and in order to attain this object, weary themselves with all kinds of

devout exercises, and neglect the essential thing, which is to flee to Jesus Christ, that they may receive, above all things, the pardon of their sins, and the assurance of their reconciliation to God. See a faithful portraiture of their condition in Rom. vii. 14 — 25; and Luke x.

Let the Priests and Levites of the law of Moses, beholding these poor souls, pass on the other side: the true servant of the Gospel of God will be touched with compassion towards them; and endeavouring to strip them of the filthy rags of their own righteousness, will present them with a better garment—the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ: for such are the people our Divine Master has resolved to honour; it is for them he says (Luke xv. 22), as Ahasuerus formerly, “make haste, and take the apparel, as thou hast said, and do even to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate, and let nothing fail of all thou hast spoken,” Esther vi. 10. These are timorous consciences, that one should be careful not to strike with the *cudgel of the law*. Ah! “lift up, lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees,” Heb. xii. 12. Say to these fearful hearts, take courage, fear not, Jesus is *God* who “will himself come to save you,” Isa. xxxv. 4. Repeat to them that “the kingdom of heaven is theirs;” that “blessed are they that mourn,”

Matt. v. 4, because there shall be given unto them "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning," Isa. lxi. 3.

In order, then, that the persons of whom we speak, may obtain true peace, we do not here preach to them faith as a duty the law commands us to perform, as a work it enjoins us to do, but we strive, under the Divine blessing, to inspire them with that faith by the preaching of the Gospel. Neither do we require that these persons should, at the commencement, lead a godly life; for we well know they cannot do it before they have received faith. We direct them to Jesus, who knows how to teach them to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and who will give them the will, inclination, and power necessary to a Christian life. As to the voluntary slaves of sin, who would abuse our words, it is in another tone we must address them.

Disciple.—Alas! how much am I to be pitied! Since our last conversation I have had no repose: I have even passed whole nights without sleep. It is only now I see how grossly I have deceived myself in relying upon my own works, and trusting in my own strength. A vain confidence and a life morally good have inflated me with a stupid

pride. I have experienced a pharisaical delight in being able, when an opportunity offered, to talk about religion, particularly when in the company of those less virtuously inclined than myself: I thought myself much above them in every respect, and it arose from a desire to be considered among them a good man, or from other motives equally criminal. More than once I have rejected and rashly condemned others, who were abundantly replenished with grace, whilst I myself was entirely destitute of it. I now begin to perceive how much I have been, and still am, blind, impotent, and covered with sins and corruption. The thick veil that had hitherto covered my eyes prevented my seeing what I now do; and when the Holy Spirit began to awaken my conscience, I soon found out the unhappy consequence of a sleepy one, in having appropriated to myself consolatory passages in the word of God, which were not applicable to my situation. Now that my conscience is awakened, the sins I have committed without scruple, appear to my imagination in the most hideous shape, terrifying and condemning me. A great number of gross sins rise up in judgment against me. At this moment I comprehend how the sight of sin is accompanied with the anguish which certain of my acquaintance have been so distressed with on account of it. I.

cannot now, as formerly, have recourse to false consolations. When I lie down to sleep, it seems as if I was going to appear before the tribunal of God, and receive the sentence of my condemnation. Good God! when I think of it I shudder. Sometimes, it is true, I have a little repose, but after short intervals of hope, the agony returns as acutely as ever. Oh! shall I ever be delivered from these fears that overwhelm me? Is there, Sir, is there grace for me? *

Pastor.—I bless God with all my heart, and thank the faithful Shepherd of souls, who has deigned to lay hold of his poor wandering sheep. I will not yet say to you, what the kind Saviour did to the widow of Nain: “weep not.” I will rather say, as he did to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep for yourselves.” Yes, weep, give free course to your tears; but at the same time be assured that your case is not desperate; that your “sickness is not

* The extremity of distress here described is not alike felt by every awakened soul: some are drawn by gentler means; but the excess usually prevails where the doctrines of the Gospel have previously been rested upon without the heart-experience of them—in those who have held the truth in unrighteousness. In all cases, however, the false peace of a natural state must be disturbed and broken; for the Saviour does not bestow his peace upon any who do not feel the want of it, and implore it at his hands.

unto death;" that your sorrow is a "godly sorrow;" and that the hour is not far distant, when your Saviour will draw nigh to pardon and console you.

Disciple.—You cannot imagine how great my distress is. It is as though God, in the rigour of his judgments, had already rejected me. What wounds me the most, is my having so often despised his grace, and now, perhaps, it is too late to have recourse to it.

Pastor.—By no means, my friend; a proof that you are not excluded from grace is, that the Lord Jesus is now working in you a sense of your misery. He would save you as a "brand plucked out of the fire." You would, indeed, have had much greater reason to despair, had he suffered you to remain in security and hardness of heart; but since he has awakened your sleepy conscience, it is a proof that he will not abandon you.

Disciple.—I well understand all that, but I am nearly in the same state that Jacob was, when they assured him his son Joseph was yet alive; that is to say, my heart can hardly be persuaded of these things, and notwithstanding I begin to believe them to be true.

Pastor.—What do you think of doing then? Where will you go with your misery? How do you hope to be delivered from it?

Disciple.—I think the best way will be to correct and amend myself.

Pastor.—See, you have already returned to a confidence in your own works. You are yet without faith, and you would amend yourself! You would invert the order according to which grace constantly acts, that is to say, you are desirous it should sanctify, before it justifies you. You expect to find that in the law which is only to be found in the Gospel, or rather in Jesus Christ himself. In thus acting, you are yourself the principal obstacle to your advancement: you will never attain to a full assurance of faith, and will continually remain without the necessary strength to lead a good life. The first grace you should aspire after is justification by faith; so soon as you shall have obtained it, your light will dawn as the break of day, and your cure, that is your sanctification, will bud forth immediately.

Before having received from on high the power to believe in the Lord Jesus, all that you can do, in your present situation, is to desire to be delivered from the sad condition sin has brought you into. By yourself you cannot go beyond that, the Saviour must set you free, "and if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," John viii. 36. But if you have it not at heart to be truly delivered from condemnation and the

dominion of sin, and are willing that only one sin should reign in you, however small it may appear in your eyes, you may believe for certain, that a single sin will be a wall of separation between you and Jesus. Deliverance from sin is the consequence and effect of faith; but to obtain this faith go to him who gives it, and resolve to renounce all that can be called sin. Would you not call those senseless who, being sick, should send for a physician without a sincere desire to be cured? Would you esteem those to have been wiser, of whom the Gospel speaks, if they had deferred going to the Saviour till they had been healed by themselves, under a pretext that it was not proper to approach him in the condition they were then in? If, then, you feel the weight of your sins, and desire to obtain deliverance from them, flee to Jesus such as you are, and seek pardon of them from him by faith. The moment in which the leprous, the blind, and the other sick, believed in the Saviour, was usually that of their cure. It is in vain that a man, by all kinds of irksome exercises and by his own free will, strives to deliver himself from his prevailing sins, and the inquietude they occasion him; it is in vain to that end, that he multiplies his reading, hears the word, weeps, fasts, gives alms, and lives in solitude. He only augments his misery, and alienates himself

further from God ; because, instead of depending solely upon the work of redemption, and giving all the glory of it to the Son of God, he still relies upon his own works. The more a person is rooted in Christ, the more he perceives that he is incapable of helping himself, and he cleaves more simply to Jesus, in whose name alone he can be saved.

Disciple.—I have more than once experienced the truth of what you say. I have frequently resolved to amend myself, and all my endeavours to that end did but aggravate my misery. What I built one day, tumbled into ruins the next, and my hopes vanished as a shadow.

Pastor.—What you state is not uncommon with persons newly affected by grace. Many, after their first awakening, remain in the same state. If they fall into any sin, instead of going humbly to the Saviour for pardon and deliverance from it, they make useless efforts to amend themselves, and not succeeding in overcoming their bad habits, they resume the attempt again and again. What is the consequence? Some fall by little and little into negligence ; and others, though more sincere and serious, return to the false opinion, that they possess the power in themselves to correct and amend their lives ; so true it is, “ that the way of man is not in himself, and it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,” Jer. x. 23. How

happy would such souls be, if, from the commencement of their being awakened, they were immediately to go to Jesus, and implore of him, the life and power they are in want of! Certainly they would be heard, and receive from him what they in vain look for in themselves or elsewhere. But man by nature is unhappily prone to reverse the order of salvation which God has established. This disposition is also yours, my dear friend, inasmuch as you expect that sanctification and amendment of life, should precede faith and a change of heart.

Disciple.—It is precisely what I have done before the Lord awakened me from the sleepy security I was in.

Pastor.—Know, then, that so long as you remain without being united to the Saviour by faith, you will be destitute of life and power, and as unable to amend yourself, as a dead person is to rise up, or a sick one to work. What plants can the heart produce, what fruit bring forth, before it has received the seed of the Gospel?

Disciple.—You draw a faithful picture of my sad condition.

Pastor.—It is nearly the same, when not having a thorough experience of our misery, and without being animated by the spirit of Christ, (who alone can enable us to live like him, and for

him) we pretend to have true faith. This pretended faith, or rather this shadow of faith, is without foundation and without life; without foundation, because not preceded by sincere repentance; and without life, because unaccompanied by sanctification. The faith which is really the work of God, is to be found in him alone, who approaches the Saviour as a lost sinner, in order to obtain pardon through his blood; and who follows him that he may live in him and for him. This faith has root and alone bears fruit.

Disciple.—I have had, however, a sincere desire to amend myself; but when I could not succeed, I was so distressed as to lose all courage.

Pastor.—It is the unalterable will of the Lord, who being a God jealous of his glory, is pleased to confound the works of men, done in their own strength, in order to compel them to go to Jesus, that they may draw life and power from the blood of reconciliation. Therefore, I do not wish that, by your own power, you could succeed in amending yourself; for, supposing it to be possible, you would never know the Saviour, never feel how precious and efficacious his blood is; never experience the pardon of sin, and the joy it produces. Yes, my dear friend, he that is desirous of reclaiming and saving himself, by his own means, is ignorant of the worth of a Saviour. While he

confesses Jesus with his mouth, in the bottom of his heart, he regards himself as his own saviour, and never can attain to true peace of mind.

Disciple.—God has, however, informed me in his word, what things are good, and what are not so ; that I ought to do this, and avoid that. This our clergy also teach us, in their sermons, in order that we may lead a Christian life. Do you not think I ought to follow the path the Gospel traces?

Pastor.—It is true the law of God shows you what is good and what is not so ; not that it expects, in the state of impotency and death in which you still are, that you can do all it commands, or avoid all it forbids, but that you may learn to know yourself to be poor, miserable, and corrupt ; that you may feel your own inability to do good, and that as such you may go to Jesus, who will grant you life and power, which neither nature or the law can. It was for this reason St. Paul said, “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” Gal. iii. 24.

In the first place, you must be convinced that you are spiritually blind, miserable, poor, and naked ; and when you shall have learnt and felt this, the Saviour will apply to you these reviving words, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. Arise and walk.” Before he shall

have freed you from the bonds of Satan, in granting you the remission of your sins, you will never be able to walk in his ways; and he will say to you, as heretofore to Peter, "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards;" that is to say, when thou hast found life, by my bloody death, and art endowed with a new spirit, "then thou shalt follow me," John xiii. 36.

Disciple.—But tell me, I intreat you, why God does not bestow upon me the strength I desire, that I may lead a good life?

Pastor.—The succour of God is not manifested till we despair of the assistance of every creature. Such are his ways in temporal as well as in spiritual deliverances.

Disciple.—It is, likewise, necessary I should tell you, that I have often endeavoured to combat my sins, but have always had the misfortune to yield to them.

Pastor.—It was because you strove against them alone, without Jesus, and was not armed with the buckler of faith; for without that, it is impossible to stand against the enemy: thus to be attacked is to be vanquished. It is only love armed with faith that renders us *more than conquerors*. Before every thing, then, pray importunately for true faith, and an assurance of your reconciliation; when you shall have obtained them, you will easily

triumph over your enemies. In fact, this is not the time for you to combat, but to acquire faith in, and feed upon the word of the Gospel, to the end that your inner man may be nourished up, and one day become a soldier of Christ. The moment you perceive any enemy or temptation approaching, whether within or without, imitate little frightened children, who run quickly to hide themselves in the bosom of their mother; that is to say, hasten in spirit and by faith to take refuge in the bosom of Jesus, for it is there you will be in safety. In your present state of spiritual infancy and weakness, you must studiously avoid every opportunity of sinning. When you shall have arrived at a riper age, and become a *man* in Christ, you will be able to resist, conflict, and overcome. The love and faithfulness of our dear Saviour towards newborn and weak believers are so great, that he carries them in his arms, hides them in his bosom, and drives the enemy from them, so that as yet they are unacquainted with his craft and his power; but when the time of their trial arrives, the enemy is permitted to approach nearer, and then they learn to resist him and overcome his temptations.

Disciple.—I have often combatted in vain, which makes me despair of success.

Pastor.—If you were so cowardly as to be discouraged in the sequel, and suffer yourself to be

again drawn away by the world, you would be of the number of those fearful and unbelieving persons who will have their part "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8, and of those who lose patience and depart from the right way.

Disciple.—I can assure you that I desire, with all my heart, to be changed.

Pastor.—This desire is a proof of your sincerity ; but as I have already told you, your wishes, resolutions, and promises of amendment are vain and useless, if you do not go as a miserable sinner to Jesus to implore your cure from him, Matt. xv. 30. How many times have you made a determination to live better? How often have you endeavoured to convert and amend yourself? Yet, to this moment, you have done nothing towards it. Why? Because you still secretly confide in your own strength. Do you really desire pardon and remission of your sins? Go to Jesus ; but go as a sinner, who can neither promise nor perform any thing.

Disciple.—I confess that I have need of being seriously and entirely converted, without which I can neither possess faith, nor obtain the grace of God.

Pastor.—You are right ; but remember, faith must precede amendment and sanctification.

When one talks of conversion, the entire work of the change and renewal of man is often meant, that is, repentance, faith, and an alteration of life. Here we use the term conversion in a sense less extensive, and mean a change of heart and mind : or, as St. Paul expresses it, "repentance from dead works," Heb. vi. 1. Conversion, in this signification, consists in knowing not only the sinful acts we have committed, but also the depth of misery, corruption, and depravity there is in our hearts ; in a lively sorrow on account of our state, accompanied by a sincere detestation of, and ardent supplication for, deliverance from it. To this grace, the Lord adds that of faith in Jesus, and confidence in his merits ; then we may apply ourselves successfully to the work of sanctification. A true and entire conversion is always attended by faith and a dependance upon grace. It is simply by faith that we renounce all and cleave to Jesus Christ ; so, likewise, it is only to a true believer that the Lord grants a sincere desire to depart from evil and the necessary strength to do so ; from whence may be concluded, that without true faith there can be no real and entire conversion. Thus, the part you have to take is to apply to the Lord Jesus, to bestow upon you grace and pardon. It is not imagined that you can save yourself : Christ alone is our Saviour and Deliverer,

He has already purchased us, paid our ransom, and obtained grace for us. It remains on our part to accept this grace by faith, and cleave to him, that we may be found in Christ, as in an impregnable fortress. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous runneth into it, and is safe," Prov. xviii. 10.

Disciple.—I understand and believe all this; but tell me, sir, what do you think of me? Do you believe that the Lord Jesus will receive such a sinner as I am, and pardon my sins?

Pastor.—Yes; without doubt I believe it, and you may go to him in full confidence of it. He knows that no one can help you but himself; and he has already waited a long time, that you might turn to him. Read the Gospel, and see who were they that were received by Jesus; they were the sick, the miserable, publicans, people who had led a bad life; in a word, *sinners*. The servants of the king were commanded to bring in the *poor*, who had no righteousness to produce; the *lame* and the *impotent*, who were incapable of acting or doing any thing; the *blind*, who, not seeing their way clearly, abandoned themselves to the pity of those willing to conduct them. As for such as were unconscious of their misery and necessities, they refused to go to the Saviour, and so excluded themselves from his grace, Luke xiv.

Disciple.—You do not know all the evil that is in me. In the first place, I have a heart so corrupt that it must be changed.

Pastor.—It is good that you should know the evil of your heart; but it is precisely because it is so bad that you have need to apply to the Saviour. Go to him then—go, such as you are; place all your confidence in him, and you will find in him the change you desire; for it is he who will cleanse and sanctify your heart, and prepare a place in it for himself to dwell.

Disciple.—I have great difficulty in believing that the Lord Jesus will draw nigh to a heart defiled like mine, and dwell in it by his grace.

Pastor.—But the light he has communicated to you, proves that he has commenced his work of grace in you; without it you could not know yourself so well, or feel so painfully your malady. In fact the Lord “looks to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit;” and “dwelleth with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit,” Isaiah lxvi. 2, and lvii. 15.

As soon as you are enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus, with all your heart, you will be washed in his blood from all sin, and delivered from all condemnation; purified from dead works and freed from the servitude of sin, that you may serve the living God, Rom. viii. 1; Heb. ix. 14. A new

spirit will be given you, a clean heart and a will inclined to good. You have received already the earnest of these graces. Your will is pure since you entertain sincere desires after sanctification, and are fearful of contracting the least pollution. If the germ of original sin is yet alive in you, know that the most advanced in sanctification are not entirely exempt from its motions; but the course these faithful souls take is to go daily to the fountain of salvation, to implore they may be washed afresh in the blood of the Lamb, and absolved from their faults; and that they may be enabled to strip themselves, more and more, of their sinful rags, and of every stain of the flesh and spirit. Here you must be on your guard against two rocks equally dangerous. One consists in believing ourselves to be so pure and holy, as to be exempt from sin, weaknesses, and imperfections. This is the character of the *hypocrite*, in whose mouth the truth is not, 1 John i. 8; Luke xvi. 15; Prov. xxx. 12. This is the language of the proud Pharisee. The other rock consists in extenuating our faults, and allowing ourselves to live after the flesh, under pretext that it is impossible to be entirely perfect; that the most pious are not without failings; that the Saviour is not so particular, and we need not be so scrupulous. This is the language of the *Old Serpent*,

and if ever so little attended to, will insensibly lead us into the paths of remissness and death. The right and sure way is, after having obtained by faith the purification of our hearts, to aspire, more and more, to be "cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord," 2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 John iii. 3. We should continually seek fresh applications of the blood of Jesus Christ, become more sensibly united to him, more sincere, more serious, more upright, more faithful; in a word, more established in the grace of justification as well as in that of sanctification, Ephes. iii. and Heb. xii.

Disciple.—I easily conceive that there is no concord between Christ and Belial.

Pastor.—Assuredly none. Jesus cannot dwell in a heart that loves sin, and rests satisfied under its dominion; but the compassionate Saviour does not disdain to draw nigh to poor sinners, who groan under the weight of their misery. These miseries, when sensibly felt and acknowledged with grief, are the maladies that move his compassion, and of which he is the physician.

Disciple.—If I were better, I should have more confidence in the Saviour; but I feel myself so unworthy that I dare not approach him.

Pastor.—That is to say, you are not willing to go to him, as an ungodly and sinful creature to

be justified, but as a saint. Observe what St. Paul says upon the subject: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. This humility accompanied by fear, proceeds from spiritual pride: yet there is nothing so truly pitiable as a proud person. You desire to stand before God in your own merits, whilst neither in heaven nor on earth has there been found any one sufficiently holy but the *Lamb of God*, Rev. v. 4. As for you, you merit nothing but hell; that is the sum of your deservings: and the more you imagine of yourself, or appropriate to yourself any thing better, the further you are from that free grace, which has been obtained and is intended for *sinner*s. As for holiness, there is now none in the nature of man; it has been destroyed by original sin: but in our extreme unworthiness, our consolation is, that "worthy is the Lamb that was slain," Rev. v. 12. It is in his blood that we are washed from our sins: such is the road to justification. When the Saviour calls to him those that are burthened and heavy laden, you are comprehended in the invitation. Draw nigh then, only believe: all is yours; do not deprive yourself of the proffered grace by unbelief and mistrust. Be assured that the Lord Jesus will effect the conquest of your

heart; not because it is good, but that he may make it so. Pride prevents your going as a poor sinner to him, so that you must not be surprised if he hides himself and keeps at a distance from you; for he *resisteth the proud*. Your soul is in a miserable condition, but he will make it his spouse if it suffer* itself to be stripped of its sinful tatters, that it may accept of and be clothed with the robe of the righteousness of God. Cease, then, to complain that you have no good to offer; be content to appear before him such as you are, and to receive of him, as unmerited grace, all you have need of.

Disciple.—I thought, on the contrary, that it was pride to aspire after the grace I am so unworthy of, and true humility not to dare to pretend to it.

Pastor.—It is an error. Souls, however well disposed, are susceptible of a false humility; first, as it regards *justification*, when they refuse to

* Let not the maintainers of the doctrine of sovereign irresistible grace be offended at this expression. Peter would not suffer his master to wash his feet, till he was told, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me," John xiii. 8. In like manner, the awakened sinner will not part with his own fancied righteousness, till convinced of its insufficiency, and that he must perish without the imputation by the Holy Spirit of the immaculate robe of Christ's righteousness.

receive, as poor sinners, the grace that is granted and offered freely to them ; secondly, as it respects *sanctification*, when they do not perform all the good they ought and can, under pretence that it would render them proud.

Disciple.—When I find myself so often in fault, I am quite discouraged, and the spark of faith, which was beginning to lighten up in my heart, is ready to expire.

Pastor.—It is right that you should be more and more divested of every good opinion of yourself, and of all confidence in your own strength ; but let not the spark of faith grace hath kindled in you be extinguished : * rather return to the Saviour with fresh confidence. Know, likewise, the difference is great between perceiving, with sorrow, the existence of sin within us, and willingly committing sin. Natural men, who live in security and impenitence, call the gross sins that reign within them by the name of infirmities, while fearful and repentant souls regard their weaknesses and involuntary faults, as enormous and prevailing sins. Both deceive themselves. If you think lightly of your faults, and feel no scruple

* Faith is a gift and work of the Holy Spirit which can never be extinguished ; but it may be, in the apprehension of the subject of it.

in committing them, you can never obtain the grace of God, nor preserve it after it has been received; but when your miseries and faults are involuntary, and produce in you self-abasement, they are no impediment to your receiving this grace, or to its preservation. You must not suppose that you only are in this condition. There is not a single child of God, who does not still groan under the feeling of his remaining corruption, and sigh after entire deliverance from it. The moment you perceive your misery, go immediately, in simplicity, to the Saviour, make a sincere confession to him of every thing, supplicate for pardon, and accept it as soon as offered. The more you exercise your faith, the more the evil you are burthened with will lose its strength, and the more likewise you will advance in sanctification.

Disciple.—It has often occurred to me that, perhaps, I have not yet sufficiently felt my misery, and that I ought to experience more sorrow and grief on account of it than I have done, as a necessary preparative for my applying to the Saviour and obtaining the assurance of his grace.

Pastor.—You are not entirely wrong. There are too many persons who wish to pass over every thing quickly, and do not sufficiently enter into the discovery of their misery, but go to the

Saviour with too much levity; it is dangerous the Lord desires serious and sedate hearts—

He deeply digs, and removes the sand,
That on his foundation we may stand.

There are, however, other persons who render the matter more difficult than it really is. Judge for yourself: would it be reasonable for a sick person to desire to be still more indisposed, before he send for a doctor? If you feel yourself miserable, it is a sufficient reason to induce you to apply to the Physician of souls.

Disciple.—During how long a time, and to what degree, ought I to feel my misery, and the grief it occasions me?

Pastor.—Until you conceive an utter aversion to every thing that can be called sin and vanity; until you despair of help from yourself and every other creature; until, driven by your misery, you go and prostrate yourself at the feet of Jesus, that you may embrace his merits, apprehend his righteousness, and receive grace and salvation from him. This consciousness of your misery, and feeling of heart-compunction, should continue all your life. It unhappily occurs to many sensible souls to lose, too soon, this feeling; and that, because they have not seriously renounced the world and sin, and because they still find a certain satisfaction in them, and try to excuse

and justify their secret attachment to evil. Again, it happens when a man endeavours to heal himself of the malady of sin, drives away the thought of it, and expects to calm his troubled conscience, before it has been healed and consoled by faith and the virtue of the blood of Jesus; for in fact

Our corruptions had remain'd for ever,
Our polluted souls ne'er been heal'd;
But for the wounds of that dear Saviour,
Who with his blood our pardon seal'd.

When pious *Bunyan* perceived that the humbling and painful feeling of his corruption had ceased, he prayed to God that he might not be cured of this frame of mind by any other means than the blood of Jesus Christ. Unhappy those who have recourse to any other remedy, and who, weary of this salutary compunction of heart, insensibly fall into levity and security. Observe here, that the moment wherein we feel ourselves most burthened and distressed with the weight of our misery, is the fittest opportunity to flee to the Saviour; for it is the design of the Father, in thus straitening us, to *draw us to his Son*. What we should then do, is to abase ourselves, weep and sigh at his feet to obtain pardon, and if we persevere in our supplications, he will not long delay to grant it. The Saviour only waits this moment to be gracious. If we neglect this oppor-

tunity, or if we approach him in another frame, or endeavour to pacify ourselves, whether by good actions or worldly enjoyments, we may, perhaps, deaden the grief of our souls for some time; but it will be only in the end to experience greater distress, if we do not find out the fatal method of hardening ourselves, which is the greatest of all evils.

Disciple.—I have often thought myself to be a man more corrupt and wicked than others, regarding it as an insurmountable obstacle to my attainment of a true and entire change. At other times, it has occurred to me that God had abandoned me, and that, after having resisted the first influences of his grace, it was useless for me to appeal to his mercy. Again, I have thought myself too young, and sin too powerful in me, but when I became older, my conversion would be more easy, and come, as it were, of itself; then I have imagined it was too late, and that not having been converted in my youth, evil had become so deeply rooted in me, there was now no remedy for it.

Pastor.—All these, and other similar thoughts, are so many suggestions of the spirit of unbelief, and only tend to retard our salvation. In fact they do so, when we listen to them, and above all, when we do not well understand the economy of

the Gospel : but when we become acquainted with the tender heart of our compassionate and faithful Saviour, we think quite differently. We then say to ourselves, "Thou hast a long time desired and sought for pardon : it cannot be but the Lord Jesus will one day grant it to thee. Good and merciful as he is, he has foreseen and fixed the time of grace, wherein he that sincerely seeks shall find it. What do I say? It is not I that have been first to desire it: it is he that hath loved me, and drawn me by the attractions of his grace :

For, if I had not felt his love
 My worthless heart renew ;
 Surely I ne'er had look'd above,
 His matchless grace to view.

Why, then, shouldest thou cease to desire, seek, and pray? Perhaps thou art approaching the happy moment when he will be gracious to thee ; and what would be thy regrets in time and eternity, if thou shouldest now be discouraged, and suffer the enemy to turn thee from the ways of salvation. Why art thou cast down, O my soul ! hope thou in God (Ps. xlii. 5,) for he is thy deliverer. If he waits to display the power of his grace, the day will come when thou shalt see the salvation of God."

Disciple.—It is precisely for that happy moment that I am impatient ; and my sorrow

proceeds from my not having yet had the enjoyment of those sweet consolations, experienced by those whom Jesus has been gracious to.

Pastor.—If you do not yet enjoy the peace of God, you have yourself hitherto prevented it, by following your erroneous ideas and walking in your own strength. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus, who knows how to bring light out of darkness, will render your errors profitable to you. In vainly endeavouring to find righteousness and salvation by the works of the law, you have learned how great your blindness, poverty, and impotency are; and likewise, how great compassion you should have for poor wandering misled souls, and that you should do all in your power to benefit and bring them back by kindness. Now you ought to know what the mind of Christ is; and because his love is unbounded, you should have an unlimited confidence in him. He has, already, pardoned your sins; he loves you, and will perfect in you the work of grace he has commenced.

Disciple.—When I reflect how often I have been unfaithful to the grace of my God, I fear lest I should be deprived of it, on account of my having too long despised it.

Pastor.—It is true, infidelity is a crime of the blackest die, because there is nothing so precious

as grace, nor anything so blessed as its influences; but there is, nevertheless, a remedy for it in Jesus. Have recourse to him the moment you perceive the approach of unbelief, and pray him to subdue it. Regard every distrustful thought, which prevents your going to Jesus to implore pardon and deliverance, as a snare of the enemy. The longer you delay going to him, the worse your malady will become, and more difficult to cure. Take for example a child, who having committed a fault, is ashamed to confess it—what is the consequence? Instead of humbling himself and asking pardon, he runs away from his father's house; the father follows and severely punishes him. But when a child, of his own accord, turns towards his father, confesses his fault, and with tears humbly begs pardon, he finds a tender parent, willing to pardon and receive him. In a word, it is faith that does all, and obtains all; and to possess this faith and confidence in the Saviour, it is only necessary to know him. The moment he manifests himself to us, he gains our heart: we love him, because convinced by his Spirit that he loves us. Presuming to expect all from his bounty, we vow a constant fidelity to him. Cease not then to sigh, seek and pray at his feet; but, at the same time, let not your conscious unworthiness be an hindrance to your acceptance of what he is willing to impart out of pure grace.

Disciple.—Your advice is good; but when I attempt to pray, a voice appears to say to me, that the Lord will not hearken to my prayers. If I endeavour to approach him with confidence, I am impeded by a secret apprehension, lest my faith should be presumptuous and ill founded; if I try to apply his gracious promises to myself, I am restrained by an impression that I am unworthy of them.

Pastor.—This does not surprise me. As you have often built upon a dead and imaginary faith, it is not astonishing that you should be fearful of deceiving yourself. If you would be preserved from every deceit and delusion of the enemy, you must not listen to what your blind reason may suggest; but depend, solely and simply, upon the gracious and suitable promises made by our kind and faithful Saviour to every sinner that calls upon him. Since you have been taught by his Holy Spirit the knowledge of your misery by nature, and have truly felt and confessed it, you may be certain, that whatever prevents your drawing nigh to him, is a device of Satan. Nothing ought to hinder; on the contrary, every thing should urge you to go to Jesus—your sins, your wants, your fears, your anguish, and even the rigour and condemnation of the law. If you attend to the voice

of reason, which is that of the flesh, or rather of the enemy of souls, it will say, "Return, the enterprise is too difficult for thee; it is in vain that thou thinkest to convert thyself; thou hast attempted it many times, without success, but thou art still unchanged; and if to be saved thou must become a new man, thy condemnation is certain." Instead of giving ear to this seducing language of Satan, you should say, "It is precisely because the work of my conversion is difficult; because I am defiled, corrupt, depraved, laden with miseries and sins, and, moreover, weak, and incapable of any good; in a word, worthy of curse and condemnation; that I have need of a Saviour, and am determined to flee to him: he alone can deliver me. What can he not do, when willing to manifest his strength in our weakness!" This, I say, is the language you ought to hold; and believe, yes believe, with an entire and firm confidence, that Jesus is merciful towards poor sinners; that there is no heart so tender and compassionate as his, and that he pities, loves, and is willing to save us, at any price, in spite of every opposition.

Disciple.—Alas, miserable that I am! I perceive that I have tormented myself with many useless difficulties. I see how much the enemy has deceived me by false reasonings; how many good impressions and gracious attractions he has

stifled in me, while he has been keeping me in a state of unbelief and mistrust.

Pastor.—It is thus the enemy labours to smother the good seed the Lord has sown in us. The attractions of grace, the good dispositions, the *hunger* and *thirst*; those desires you sometimes feel, which press you to draw nigh to the Saviour, that you may find in him righteousness and life; the feeling of confusion which leads you to abase yourself at his feet, under a sense of your innumerable miseries; the remembrance of his great love for sinful men, of his sufferings and death upon the cross, which invite you to fix your regards and thoughts upon him; all these are not of yourself, but proceed from the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of Jesus who, by these means, is conducting you to the knowledge of your Saviour, that you may enter into his blessed communion and the enjoyment of his great salvation. Thus, every time you have similar experiences, receive them as invitations coming from the Lord Jesus, by which he is drawing you to himself. Approach him in full confidence; a repentant sinner dares expect every thing from him.

Disciple.—I feel a disposition to such a confidence; but am distracted and disquieted by the objects that surround me.

Pastor.—That proceeds, partly, from remaining unbelief, and the doubts your carnal reason suggests. The more we attend to our own reasonings, the less we advance in faith. It is, likewise, occasioned by your still having too great an attachment for the things of this world. It appears to me that you yet take pleasure in them, and seek in them a certain satisfaction, which deprives you of many happy moments, that you might otherwise enjoy in communion with the Lord. But as he is faithful, and jealous of his right over your soul, he permits you to find nothing but bitterness and distaste in worldly things; and that, because he loves you, and would himself be your sole joy. Profit by this salutary dispensation. Acknowledge, with shame, how dangerous the vain, foolish, and transitory things of this world are; and that you may be more weaned from them, seek the purification of your heart, and an entire deliverance from the vanities of time, in the blood of Jesus. Thus you will extract sweetness from bitterness itself; and that, which has hitherto abated your faith, will serve to fortify and strengthen it.

I will further remark: when in your occupations you experience distractions and vain thoughts, do not attack them in your own strength,

as if you were able to dissipate and force them to disappear ; but the instant you perceive them, fix your mind upon your Saviour, as a sinner who feels the continual need of his grace. While Martha is "careful and troubled about many things," nothing is more profitable or necessary than to sit, with Mary, at the feet of Jesus. He has often presented himself at the door of your heart, that he might *enter in and sup with you*; that is, to bless and communicate fresh graces to you. But you were absent, your heart was pre-occupied by other things, and you lost the fruit of his gracious visitation. In future, if you wish to profit by them, set more value upon such moments of grace; be more upon your guard, less inattentive to the voice of the faithful friend of your soul, that when he knocks at the door of your heart, you may not suffer him to depart, but open to him directly. All the internal reproaches, intimations, and attractions you feel, from time to time, are so many calls, which say, as heretofore to Mary, "The master is come and calleth for thee; arise, quit all and fly to him; believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God."

Disciple.—Among my great and innumerable infirmities, there is one I would particularly notice. When I think of God, or would present myself before him, it is with trembling; I am often so

full of fear, that I can say with David " My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Ps. cxix. 120.

Pastor.—Alas! it is thus we are fallen from happy communion with our God. The fire of his love is so extinguished in our hearts, who of children are become strangers; who instead of drawing nigh to him with confidence, tremble to appear before his face. What has it not cost him to bring us back to himself, that we may recover this confidence, this child-like liberty, this familiar intercourse that we ought to have with our heavenly Father? The reason you still have so much fear and mistrust is, that you do not yet know his tender heart, his great love for his poor creatures. You look at him only in the glass of the law, which represents him as a terrible and jealous God, a severe judge armed with thunders, ever ready to hurl at transgressors. Contemplate him rather in the mirror of the Gospel. There you will behold a God, manifest in the flesh, drawing nigh to man in the person of Jesus Christ. There you will discover in him nothing but clemency, mercy, tenderness, and paternal love. Though our fathers and mothers should give us up, he will never forget nor abandon us; he pities our miseries. This Saviour-God is moved with compassion for poor sinners; their afflictions touch him;

he melts at their distresses. Why do you not consider the thoughts of peace he entertains towards you, to what a degree he loves you, and all the benefits he intends you? Instead of trembling with fear, you should leap for joy, and shed tears of tenderness and gratitude. Dismiss then your apprehensions; it is not your destruction, but your eternal happiness he designs. His word assures you of it, and it well deserves your credence. Fully convinced that he loves you, believe in him; open your heart to him; cleave to and embrace him, as your sovereign good and your all. In him is grace, salvation and succour for every poor sinner.

Disciple.—You speak of his succour: I have long supplicated and waited for it; but his help is slow in coming, and I much fear Jesus will not grant it me.

Pastor.—Upon that head there are *four* things to be observed. *First*, Do not judge of God's intentions by your own ideas of them, but according to what he has revealed in his word; it is in his gracious promises we learn his truly paternal heart. All we read in the Prophets, Psalms, and the New Testament, breathe nothing but grace, love, and peace; every thing written therein is for your consolation. He says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that

I will not turn away from them, yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good," Jer. xxxii. 40, 41. *Secondly*, Never contemplate the Divinity but in the person of Jesus Christ. Out of Christ God is a consuming fire; look at him in the face of Jesus, who is the express image of his person, for all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ; "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee," John xvii. 21. "He that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also," 1 John iii. 23. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," John xiv. 9. Behold Jesus upon the cross; meditate upon his martyrdom; griefs, wounds, agonies, and death. Reflect that it was for men, and for you among others, that he suffered all those things, as his word testifies. Are you convinced that he has done so, in the serious and sincere intention of redeeming you and making you happy? In short, do you not believe that, when affixed to the cross, he had in view your miseries, your unbelief, your enmity against him, your indifferency to and your ingratitude for his surpassing love? All this did not prevent his dying for you; do not hesitate then to place your entire confidence in him. *Thirdly*, Your own experience ought to teach you to know the heart of your heavenly Father. Reflect with what infinite patience he has supported you in your state of impenitence and perversity. Now,

where is the man, who, having the right and power to punish his enemy, waits till he repents, that he may have the pleasure of forgiving him? Yet this is what the great lover of souls does in respect of men who are his enemies; it is what he has done towards you. You were in his hands; he could have ruined and destroyed you; he has not done so, because he would preserve you for the time of grace, for the day of salvation. O prodigy of long suffering! O riches of patience! how great, incomprehensible, infinite! What ought to render his care of you so much more admirable and astonishing is, that instead of punishing and damning you, as he possessed the power and the right to do, every time you have provoked him, he has heaped upon and surrounded you with benefits; and that, to soften the hardness of your heart, win your affections, and convince you that he was resolved to save you at any price. *Fourthly*, Call to mind how many times he has acted towards you, as the Father with the Prodigal Son. He has gone a thousand times after his lost sheep; he has employed a thousand means to touch your heart, to warn you of the dangers that menaced you, to allure you to himself. In spite of your many slights and resistances,* he has not been weary of offering† you grace, nay soliniting‡ your ac-

* Isa. i 3, 4.

† Eb. i. 18, 19.

‡ Ib. lv. 1.

reptance of it: and after all these proofs of love, dare you imagine that he will refuse you grace, now he beholds you humbled and importunately supplicating for it at his feet? What then? will he refuse you what he has so solemnly promised, and offered so many times? No, no, it is impossible: "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." Be persuaded then that he desires your salvation now as much as ever. Let nothing prevent your drawing nigh to this kind and merciful Saviour with an entire confidence, well assured that he only waits* the moment when you shall feel the whole weight of your sins, and the urgent need of deliverance from them, to be gracious to you. Is this your present condition? Go, go in full assurance to Jesus our propitiation; go, draw out of the plenitude of his merits grace for grace, according to the promises made to you in the Gospel. *Finally*, I exhort you to attend assiduously to prayer. The oftener we approach the Saviour, the more we increase in the knowledge of him; and the more he is known the sweeter intercourse with him becomes. By that your confidence in him will augment; and since you are so weak in faith, implore him unceasingly and earnestly to confirm it. By frequent prayer, you will learn to pray well; in exercising

* Isa. xxx. 18.

your faith, it will be strengthened daily. By this intercourse of the heart, your love for the Saviour will continually increase, and your union with him become more intimate and perfect. Conversation with the children of God will also be of great use to you; but above all things, apply yourself to the reading of and meditating upon the word of God, contained in the holy Gospel. It will open your eyes to see how much the heart of Jesus is disposed towards poor sinners, who, under a sense of their misery, sigh after him, and shed at his feet their tears and complaints.

Disciple.—By the grace of God, I begin to recover my sight, to discover the enormity of my sins, and my extreme misery; but, like Mary Magdalen in the garden, and the two disciples, on their way to Emmaus, my eyes are yet held, so that I do not distinctly know the Lord Jesus.

Pastor.—When you were enabled, by the grace of God, to perceive the depth of unbelief and sin that was in your heart, you were like a man starting out of a sound sleep, and were astonished at not having known before what you then discovered; but that was only the beginning of your awakening. When by faith you see and apprehend the great salvation wrought out by the Lord Jesus; when you are able to confide in his perfect merits, then you will be truly awakened.

Then you will "behold his face in righteousness," and you will "be satisfied, when you awake, with his likeness." Give ears then to the voice of the Gospel; pray the Lord to open your eyes, and unstop your ears. In seeking from him the pardon of your sins, supplicate for the gift of faith. This gift comprehends all others; for every Christian virtue, as humility, meekness, charity, &c. are its natural consequences and necessary fruits.

Disciple.—I am convinced that the greatest evil, and the sin that most burthens me, is unbelief; and I indeed desire to have faith, for I know how great must be the happiness to be able to believe, but I cannot yet.

Pastor.—It is a work and gift which the Holy Spirit must operate in you, by the word of the Gospel. For the rest, I see with pleasure that you are aware of your impotence with respect to it, and sigh after the gift of faith. The Lord, who helps your unbelief, says to you, as he did formerly to the father of the lunatic, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth," Mark ix. 23. Thus then boldly fix all your confidence in his mercy and faithfulness. It is in the salvation of Jesus you will find quietness and peace, the pardon of your sins; deliverance from your enemies; a new heart; with the inclination and necessary strength to lead a new life.

Disciple.—I begin to believe that my Saviour will carry on in me his work of grace, and that he has, already by his divine virtue, produced some change in my heart. Formerly, when any one spoke of him, his Gospel, his great love for souls, the efficacy of his blood, and the fruits of faith, I listened to them with a kind of indifferency; but now I cannot hear these things spoken of without my heart being sensibly affected; rejoiced, and encouraged.

Pastor.—I also believe that the Lord has touched your heart, and that he disposes you to believe in him, in order that you may receive, by faith, the pardon of your sins; but that you may not stray from the path traced out in the Gospel, it is expedient that I should give you the following instructions:

First: *The grace of reconciliation is the fruit of the meritorious death of Jesus, on which account alone God is propitious to sinners.* According to the irrevocable sentence of the law of God, every man as a sinner is condemned, and subject to eternal death; but it having proceeded from the envy and seduction of Satan that man fell into sin, the Son of God, full of compassion and touched with their misery, has willingly become their Mediator. In order to reconcile them to God, he took their nature. He became a man

like us; he bore the curse due to our sins, and shed his blood to expiate them. This was infinitely more than, if every sinner had died; than if we had all suffered the rigour of the punishment due to our sins; than if we had paid all that divine justice had a right to demand of us. On Good Friday, the day of the great reconciliation, the suit of sinners was tried and decided; it was then, once and for ever, closed, and we may say, with truth, "it is finished," John xix. 30. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the seal of the absolution of the human nature. Thus, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18. Thus, "the iniquity of the land was removed in one day," Zech. iii. 9. By one only oblation, in his own person, the Saviour has abolished sin, and sat down on the right hand of the Father, "to reign for ever and ever," Heb. x. 12. Behold, then, how the Son of God has done, what all men together, with all their efforts and all their sufferings, could never have effected. Their works, their repentance, their toils, their torments, all would have ended in nothing. It required the martyrdom of the God-man. His sacrifice could alone be available. Thus sinners, who implore his merits, need not

join their righteousness to his. The Mediator has done all; he has reconciled God to them; he has presented his blood to his heavenly Father, who is fully satisfied with it. Sinners then have only to flee to Jesus, and cleave to him by faith: but you must well observe, that they have no access to him but when they approach him as poor sinners; that is, when they acknowledge their sins and feel their misery. With such dispositions they dare draw nigh to him, believe, pray, and hope to find grace in his sight. The Son of man, who has paid our debts, has a right to remit them to us; for he has "blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, nailing it to his cross;" and he has replaced that obligation by millions of pardons, sealed with his blood, to be distributed to every poor repentant sinner who supplicates his mercy. From thence it arises, that God neither will nor can condemn a sinner who is in Christ Jesus. His justice, no more than his mercy, can refuse pardon to a sinner who asks it in the name of Jesus. The heritage we have lost in Adam we recover by Jesus Christ, even with a glory infinitely greater than that of our first Father; for we can say, in a sense far superior of the Saviour, what the sacred history did of David, "David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken away: the Israelites found that nothing was wanting of all that had

been taken from them; David recovered all," 1 Sam. xxx. 18, 19. Herein is the whole of the Gospel.

*Disciple:—*If the Son of God has obtained grace and salvation for mankind; why are there so great a number that perish?

*Pastor:—*Because they will not believe the Gospel of Christ.* It is assuredly sad that so many souls reject the counsel of God; for his will is, that no one should perish, but that all should be saved.† Among those who deprive themselves of the salvation of God, there are several kinds. Some are impenitent sinners, hardened in vice, and insensible to their spiritual miseries, who love sin, and pass their lives in security: others are unbelievers—heathens, or what are called infidels, who, seduced by a false philosophy, and pretending to submit the revelation of Jehovah to the judgment of their blind and carnal reason, reject or despise the mystery of godliness, which they regard as a scandal and a folly. Again, there are hypocritical pharisees, ancient and modern, self-righteous persons, who, founding their hope of salvation upon their false virtues, natural or acquired, or upon their pretended good works, disown Jesus Christ and his righteousness, alone available and perfect. Persons of this description

* John v. 40.

† 2 Pet. iii. 9.

being unwilling to be convinced, by the Spirit of God; of their total state of corruption and impotency, as to any goodness, feel not their need of being saved freely, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and being purified by his blood. Pretending to be able to convert and sanctify themselves, they refuse to go, as poor miserable and naked sinners, to draw out of the fulness of the merits of Jesus, the grace he has acquired and designed for sinners. But I do not rank among these unbelievers, those timid souls, who, however much they may sigh after the Saviour, are weak and wavering, though still desirous of believing firmly. The germ of faith is in them, but opposed by doubts and mistrust; nevertheless the Lord will not quench the smoking flax, nor destroy the spark of faith he has kindled in them.

Disciple.—You tell me many things of which I have hitherto been quite ignorant; and had I heard them before, I should have been unable to comprehend them.

Pastor.—It is because (as Isaiah says, xxix. 11) the Gospel is a *sealed book*. To comprehend and truly receive it, and the mysteries of God contained it, the Holy Spirit must illuminate the understandings and touch the hearts of men. When the Gospel is proclaimed, and either by preaching, reading, or meditating upon it, the

grace of God in Jesus Christ is offered to us, his Spirit accompanies it with his divine virtue, in order to our feeling the efficacy of it. Those who do not resist* his operations are enlightened and quickened; they are conducted into the knowledge of sin, a sense of their misery, and the need they have of divine grace; and in this way they are drawn to Christ Jesus. If like St. John (Rev. v.) you weep because the seals of the book are not yet opened to you; "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Lamb that is seated on the throne," will loose the seals and open the book, so that you may read the act of your reconciliation and pardon, and see your name written in the Book of Life.

Learn, *secondly, how grace in Jesus Christ is offered by the word of the Gospel.* All our hopes of salvation should be founded upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ, which is offered us in the Gospel, according to the exhortation of St. Peter, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 13. The work of man's salvation, properly speaking, consists in his being reconciled to God. Now salvation has been ob-

* No doubt the spirit of God is omnipotent, yet the sacred Scriptures bear witness that men are sometimes permitted to resist his influences, Acts vii. 51; Matt. xiii. 7 and 22.

tained by the blood of Jesus, God is the first to present to man the hand of reconciliation; and, not content with offering us pardon, assures us that it is already granted, and that no one can bring any accusation against a sinner whom God justifies. This compassionate God knows that, like our father Adam, we cannot appear before him without shame and fear, nevertheless is willing to encourage us to approach unto him, with confidence, and has made us the most solemn and comforting promises. That you may be convinced of it, read the following passages in the Holy Scriptures: Isaiah xxx. 18, 19; xxxv. 4; xl. 1, 2; xli. 14, 17; xlv. 2, 3, 4; xlv. 1, 2, 3, 4; lxi. 1, 2; Luke i. 33; Psalms xxii. 26, 27; lxviii. 18, 19; cxlix. 4; Zech. ix. 11. "All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus," 2 Cor. i. 20. His own declaration is, "according to your faith be it unto you," Matt. ix. 29; 1 John v. 10, 11. What do I say? the witness of the Holy Trinity is herein unanimous. The Father, speaking of the Son, declares that it is in him that we must seek for and find eternal life; and the operations of the Holy Ghost chiefly consist in bearing testimony to us of the Saviour, and revealing him in us. The Lord himself comes "by water and blood," 1 John v. 6; that is to say, he offers himself to us in person, in baptism and the sacra-

mental supper, in order to encourage fearful souls, and to convince sinners that there is pardon in him. And when a man, like Thomas, "is slow to believe," (John xx. 24, 25) the gracious Saviour shews him, in the Spirit, his bleeding wounds, and entreats him to believe in him. Reject not then the promises of God, but give him glory, by believing them. Do not the Scriptures declare that God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live," Ezek. xxxiii. 11; that the Son of man, your friend and Saviour, hath "power on earth to forgive sins," Matt. ix. 6. Disconsolate and sorrowful heart, take comfort then, and believe the Gospel, which is proclaimed to you by my mouth. Do not imagine that I am so rash as to speak *peace* where there is no peace. No, I am not a person to flatter the ungodly, or to offer false consolations to the impenitent sinner; for I have learned of my Master not to "cast pearls before swine, nor to give that which is holy to the dogs," Matt. viii. 6. But I see you are a burthened sinner, and that the weight of your misery causes you to heave a thousand sighs, and shed bitter tears at the feet of Jesus, waiting for the assurance of pardon. Convinced that you abhor sin, that mortal poison of the soul, which has caused the cruel death of the Son of God, I do not hesitate to declare to you,

what the Lord has commanded me; and I think I cannot better obey his will, than by conducting his poor thirsty sheep to the fountain of living waters. I repeat to you then, *believe that the Lord Jesus has pardoned all your sins*; that the remission of your sins has been already obtained by the death of the Son of God; that from the moment your heart sighed for its possession, it was solemnly granted you in heaven, in presence of the holy angels, who have rejoiced* at it; and in order that you may have the assurance of it, it only remains that you should believe. Thus believe the Gospel, Mark vi. 36; ix. 23, 24; xi. 24.

Disciple.—Ah, my gracious God, how is my heart affected by what I hear! Joy, mixed with shame and astonishment, has taken possession of my soul. O how compassionate and faithful is the Lord Jesus; how great is his love for poor sinners! he is never weary of offering them his grace, nor does he cease till they accept of it.

Pastor.—I have long desired to see you come to this point. That I may finish what I have to say on the subject of reconciliation, I must, *thirdly*, make some remarks concerning the *acceptance of grace by faith*. This acceptance is so much the more necessary, as the assurance and enjoyment of salvation depend upon it. Although salvation

* Luke xv. 7.

has been obtained for us by Jesus Christ, and proclaimed in the Gospel, we can have no part in it, unless we accept of it by faith. We are in the condition of those unbelieving and rebellious, of whom it is said, "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2. When the Saviour calls you to him by the Gospel, it is as though he offered you his hand in sign of reconciliation. If you believe in him, give him your heart, and, by faith, accept the redemption obtained by his blood; it is as if you returned your hand as a pledge of an eternal alliance with him. The covenant is reciprocal; and such your God is willing to enter into with you, and only waits for a *yes* on your part, that it may be ratified, and your pardon registered in heaven.

Disciple.—I have still a secret apprehension; it is, lest I should fall into a delusion such as I have before experienced. I try to console and assure myself, but in vain, because I can discover no change in my heart or conduct.

Pastor.—Hold by the word of the Lord, which says, "Be not afraid, only believe," Mark v. 36. So long as a man loves sin and excuses it; so long as his heart continues unaffected by a sincere compunction, and yet finds the means of consoling and promising himself salvation, he is deceived,

or rather deceives himself; but from the moment I discovered in you quite opposite dispositions, I have entertained but one fear, namely, lest you should remain at a distance from the Saviour, and, through mistrust, not accept the pardon and peace he offers.

Disciple.—I confess that I have great apprehension of appropriating to myself those things which may not belong to me. Tell me, how can I be certain of not making a false application of the grace of our Lord?

Pastor.—I intreat you to remark, that it is necessary for you to possess the three following dispositions: *first*, a deep experience of your misery, accompanied by sorrow on account of your sinful state; *secondly*, a sincere desire to obtain pardon and deliverance from it; *thirdly*, a hunger and ardent thirst after grace, reconciliation, and sanctification. If, under such impressions, you can believe the Saviour died for you; if he assures you, by his Spirit, that he loves you, and will receive you, and is yours; that he accepts the offering you have made him of your heart, your life, your all, then the application you may make of his grace and merits will not be false, but in conformity to the will of God. I must enlarge on the subject of the forementioned dispositions. As to the *first*, we have considered in our former conversation

the knowledge or experience of our misery. Observe, further, that this misery consists in two particulars; one is the total depravation of our nature, the other, actual sin. Thus to know our misery is, in the first place, to be convinced that our soul, with all its faculties, and our body, with all its members, our whole nature is ruined, polluted; and inclined to every evil, principally to unbelief, pride, and hypocrisy; incapable of any good, and averse to every thing spiritual. To know our misery, *secondly*, is to feel ourselves laden with all kinds of sin and transgression against the holy law of God, which subjects us to eternal condemnation. This burden of sin, combined with the malediction that attends it, is an overwhelming weight, which oppresses the conscience, wounds the heart, and, like David, "causes us to sigh, weep, and groan, night and day," Ps. xxxviii. A soul, taught by the Holy Spirit thus to know its misery, cannot long exist in such a state, without ardently desiring to find the pardon of its sins and deliverance from its distresses.

Again, in offering you pardon and deliverance, the Lord expects that you should renounce all your sins, small and great, without exception; that you should hold them in horror, and consider liberation from the servitude of sin, a pure grace

and the greatest of all happiness. It is not supposed that we can, in our own strength, overcome evil or make ourselves better. In vain do we form the firmest resolutions, and make the greatest efforts. To be free, the Son of God must himself enfranchise us. Without that, sin will ever be our master, and continually exercise its power and dominion over us. No means of effectual resistance, but through faith, by which we have recourse to the Saviour, and implore him to absolve us from it, and deliver us from its dominion: "whom resist, stedfast in the faith," 1 Pet. v. 9.

Newly awakened souls have great need to be on their guard against the dangerous allurements the world is ever presenting to them. It is still more destructive to endeavour to tranquilize their internal disquietude by amusements. Nothing but the grace of the Lord Jesus, apprehended by faith, can effect it: every other remedy is poison. Observe, likewise, that there is great difference between the desire of being free, and freedom itself. Every truly repentant person wishes to be liberated; but actual deliverance is only experienced by those who surrender themselves, without reserve, to the Saviour, and are received by him and sealed with his seal. I have yet another remark to make, which applies to those who aspire after the liberty of the children of God; it

is, that they not only should renounce every attachment to the world, but also every good opinion of themselves, their wisdom, virtues, piety, and good works; they must say of all these, as the Apostle did of his legal and pharisaical righteousness, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ," Phil. iii. 8.

Disciple.—I find in myself some of the dispositions you describe. I know my misery, and groan under it; I sincerely desire the pardon of and deliverance from my sins; but I still hesitate to apply to myself the word of reconciliation, fearing such application may be my own work, instead of the actings of a lively faith, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. In this uncertainty, I think it best to wait till the Lord shall have given me stronger assurance that he will grant me grace, and I am in a proper state to receive it.

Pastor.—After all that the Lord has done for you, nothing should inspire a doubt in your mind. The perception of your misery is the means God employs to draw you to his Son, John vi. 44. You desire the grace which is in Jesus Christ; well, that is the commencement of faith; it is the work of the Holy Spirit, conducting you to the Son, that

you may find absolution through his blood, and justification in his perfect merits. Take heed of falling into ingratitude and resisting this preventing grace. Be on your guard also against the expectation of or desire after extraordinary signs. It is "by faith and not by sight" that we must walk, 2 Cor. v. 7. The word of God is the only foundation of our faith; and he commands us to believe: "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 40. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. "Repent ye and believe the Gospel," Mark i. 15. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. It is upon these promises, and, among others that blessed invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matt. xi. 28,) that you should depend, in going to and placing your entire confidence in the Lord; for, in Scripture language, *going to Jesus* and *believing in him* are the same thing: "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," John vi. 35. After so many assurances, whoever hesitates to go to the Saviour, deserves the reproach formerly made to

his disciples, on account of their unbelief and hardness of heart, Mark xvi. 14.

Disciple.—Unworthy creature that I am ! it is too true that I have often required a sign that I might believe. I imagined that I ought to expect a voice from heaven, or see, with my eyes, the Lord Jesus in person, saying to me, "Thy sins are forgiven," Luke vii. 48. How senseless I have been ! is it not enough that he has so clearly and repeatedly promised it in his holy word ?

Pastor.—Sometimes, perhaps, the Lord is so condescending towards particular individuals, as to give them sensible and extraordinary assurances of his grace and pardon of sin ; however, it may be considered temerity to expect such communications. It should be sufficient that we have his word ; and it ought to be said of us, as St. John said of the nobleman, "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him," John iv. 50. This word respects all who approach the Lord with a contrite heart. Observe how St. Paul censures those who desire to obtain faith by extraordinary means : "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above," but "the word is nigh thee," Rom. x. 6—8 ; and what is this word ? It is "the word of faith which we preach ;" for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom.

x. 8—17. It is thus concerning faith, that the Holy Spirit directs us to the word and written testimony. To look for any other evidence is to give access to the spirit of seduction, who desires nothing more than to turn us out of the sure and right way into the allusive paths of error. External signs may be the production of a heated imagination, or the delusions of the enemy; but “the foundation of God standeth sure,” (2 Tim. ii. 19) and his word is alone infallible.

Disciple.—I am well persuaded the word of God is true, and that it offers pardon to every poor sinner that implores it. I do indeed esteem those happy who partake of this grace; but it is not yet given me to believe my sins are forgiven.

Pastor.—It is nevertheless true, that you are one of those trembling sinners, who feeling themselves to be such, desire to be absolved, and sigh after grace; consequently all the gracious invitations of God, all the consoling promises of the Gospel, respect you and appertain to you. Are you the only one in the world, in whose favour the word of God is not to be realized and accomplished? Are you the only sinner furnishing for grace, to whom the Saviour will refuse his succour? Believe me, if you do not already enjoy the peace of God, it is not because the Saviour refuses it; it is your mistrust that deprives you of it, and the

remains of secret incredulity that prevent his granting you the joy of his salvation, Mark vi. 5, 6. You torment yourself unreasonably, with all kinds of doubts and imaginary difficulties—sad productions of unbelief. Notwithstanding, you have a sincere desire, which is a spark of faith, and this spark the Lord Jesus will not quench. If, such as you are, you draw nigh to him, the fire of his love will relumine “the smoking flax,” and his hand will bind up “the bruised reed,” Isaiah xlii. 3. You ought to regard these involuntary doubts, and mistrust, as a mariner does the waves that cross his course: he surmounts them and urges towards his port. Such kind of thoughts not only impair your spiritual strength, but are greatly injurious to the Saviour, who would have us place an unbounded confidence in him.

Disciple.—The conversation of certain pious acquaintances may have contributed to inspire this mistrust and discouragement. They professed to have the enjoyment of the full and complete assurance of their reconciliation. Others have even given me to understand, that I was still in a state of condemnation, because I had not this assurance.

Pastor.—The persons who have held this language to you have acted in an evangelical manner. When those to whom we speak are in a state of

fatal security, it is well to expose to them the danger they are in; but when they are, poor souls, sensible of their misery, it is no less proper to encourage them. Such is the method the Gospel prescribes: "Say ye unto your brethren they are my people,* and to your sisters there is pardon for them,"† Hosea ii. 1. Saint Paul says, "him that is weak in the faith receive ye," (Rom. xiv. 1,) and "to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak," 1 Cor. ix. 22. As for the rest, although faith and the assurance of salvation be susceptible of different degrees of certainty, I would not, my dear friend, have you continue in a state of incertitude, without knowing where you are. On the contrary, I exhort you not to rest satisfied until you are confirmed in the faith and enjoy the assurance of being reconciled to God. We have that assurance, when we are in possession of the grace of our Lord, Heb. xiii. 9. "Wherefore the rather give diligence to make your calling and election sure," (2 Peter i. 10,) by the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Disciple.—Tell me, I pray, how I may be enabled to apprehend the Saviour, so as to appropriate to myself what he has done for me, and possess the enjoyment of it.

Pastor.—Receive with faith, as a poor sinner,

* Ammi.

† Rahamah

the word of reconciliation. Supplicate for that faith, by the operation of which you may embrace the salvation of God; appropriate it to yourself and enjoy it, as a benefit that belongs to you. In such a frame of mind, you will say to yourself, "O that it would please God that the word of reconciliation might be thus proclaimed to me! O that the Lord Jesus would assure me that he died for me; that he pities, loves, and pardons me; that he will be gracious to me; that I am one of the elect! Why have I not that salutary hunger, that ardent thirst, that lively faith, whereby I could apprehend and embrace my Saviour? I would cleave to him, serve him with all my heart, and remain for ever devoted to him." If these be the desires of your soul, you will experience that the Lord Jesus has given himself to you, and he will assure you of your acceptance through his grace. Then you will have found the *pearl of great price*, contained in the Gospel—the salvation of God, hidden in Jesus, Matt. xiii. 46. Do you still doubt of being able to obtain this treasure? Put yourself in the place of those burthened sinners who seek rest at the feet of the Saviour; of those parched souls, who implore him to quench their thirst. In such a condition, listen to the gracious promises of your God. He assures you, that if you are "converted" to him "your sins shall be blotted out," Acts iii.

19; that if you "hunger and thirst after righteousness" you shall "be filled," Matt. v. 6. To dissipate all your doubts, as to the certainty of these promises, he has sealed them by his oath, (2 Cor. i. 20,) and it is thus, "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," Heb. vi. 17—19. All the promises of God are so many solemn assurances. Take care, then, not to raise an obstacle to his work, by doubt and mistrust, but *believe*: for it is by faith we receive the witness of God, and "he that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. On the contrary, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son," 1 John v. 10. In what does this record consist? It is that God grants the sinner, through grace, remission of sins and "eternal life" which is in his Son," 1 John v. 11. It was "by faith the Elders obtained a good report" even when "they saw the promises afar off," Heb. xi. 9, 13. Everything, then, is resolved into the necessity of faith in the Lord Jesus. It is to the

believer that the "Spirit beareth witness that he is a child of God," Rom. viii. In such confidence, go to the compassionate and faithful Saviour and he will give himself to you. If you receive him as your best friend, as the only and eternal bridegroom of your soul, he will grant you pardon, and give you the privilege, the "power to become a child of God, John i. 12; for, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. Consider that the term *save* comprehends every thing: reception by grace, pardon, free justification, being made happy in this world and the next. It is this great salvation that you are to accept and appropriate to yourself, by cleaving to Jesus, as Jacob did, and not ceasing to pray and weep till he has blessed you, Hosea xii. 4.

As to the assurance of your reconciliation, it is not upon the progress you have made in piety that it should be founded; no, if your heart tells you, from the testimony of the Lord, that you are a child of God, absolved and pardoned, it is not on account of your being virtuous, devout, just, or charitable. The foundation of this assurance is the blood of propitiation shed by Jesus for you, and which he sprinkled upon your conscience when you believed in him. It is on that account that you can say with Saint Paul, by pure *grace*, and solely through

the merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, "I have obtained mercy as the chief of sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. Yes, it is only in virtue of the merits of the Saviour; that a repentant sinner receives salvation, and experiences the joy of hearing these words: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Works, even those that are the fruits of faith, pass for nothing in the matter of justification; all is pure grace, Ephes. ii. 8. Justification is neither the consequence nor reward of sanctification: in justification man is considered only as a sinner and incapable of any good; and it is in this character that he is pronounced just, and "his faith is counted for righteousness," Romans iv. 5. Justification then precedes sanctification, and we are received into a state of grace before we are actually godly. If we were to found the assurance of our salvation upon the progress we may have made in sanctification, we never should be assured of it, because our best works are defective. It is necessary that the foundation be immoveable upon which we establish the assurance of our salvation; and this foundation is Jesus and his death: there is no other.

Disciple.—But ought not a Christian to examine himself carefully, whether he possesses the evidences of faith or not?

Pastor.—Every child of God ought to, and can assure himself, that he is in the faith, either

by the witness of the Spirit in his conscience, or by the fruits of grace produced in him. He has need, then, to examine himself lest he should have "believed in vain," 1 Cor. xv. 2. For himself, that which assures him that he is in the faith, is the internal witness of the Spirit of God. For others, and particularly the children of God, he proves his faith to them by those works which are distinguishingly the consequences of it. Thus before men he is justified by his works: "by works his faith is made perfect," James ii. 22.

To return to the subject of the assurance of salvation; I know no other means of obtaining it than by applying to the Lord Jesus. Therefore, since he invites you, go to him, pray, knock, seek. Seek his grace, not in the performance of the works of the law, but through the merits and death of Christ. Supplicate for it, as a poor beggar does for a morsel of bread; as one languishing on a bed of sickness desires relief; as a criminal arrived on the scaffold seeks for a reprieve. Already this grace is obtained for you; Jesus designs it for you; he says to you, "Come. And let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17.

This is the Gospel Jesus Christ himself preached, and which all his faithful servants should proclaim.

This is that light which should be raised "upon a candlestick;" this is the bread which belongs to *children*. It is their consolation, their life, their felicity. Receive, embrace this Gospel—it belongs to you; neither Satan, nor your own heart, can contend against the grace offered you. By refusing, you would offend your Saviour; you would imitate a miserable creature, who casts upon the ground the rich present of a powerful benefactor, and tramples upon it in his presence. It only remains for you to receive the gift of salvation: nothing more sweet or easy.*

Do not expect a particular revelation; it is very rarely the Lord gives any one such extraordinary evidences of his grace; yet they sometimes occur. The Apostle Thomas was an example of it, as were some other children of God; but "blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed," John xx. 29. Even those who have been favoured with such kind of assurances, which may be called miraculous, instead of being elated by them, must still rest all their dependance upon the word of God. The word is the great means God employs to bring men into the faith. The word, publicly preached by Peter on one occasion, converted three thousand persons, and five thousand on another, Acts ii. 41; iv. 4. And observe these converts possessed what

* See Psalm cxvi. 12, 13.

David terms "the joy of salvation," Psalm li. 12 ; for they praised God in the simplicity of their hearts. Such, also, was the happy state of the Philippian gaoler, who "rejoiced with all his house," the moment he had the felicity of being brought into the faith which is in the Lord Jesus.

Like them, receive the Gospel with simplicity. The Saviour declares, that "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," Mark x. 15.. What is the conduct of a little child ? He is informed there is something good for him ; what does he do ? he prays, solicits, cries, and importunes, till it is shown to him. As soon as it is offered, he extends his little hand, and the moment he has got it, rejoices and holds it fast, lest it should be taken from him. This is a faithful portrait of a simple heart, which by faith apprehends the grace of the Lord Jesus. Some author has rightly said, that "faith possesses whatever good it can embrace." In fact, the Lord fulfils to every believer, the promise formerly made to the children of Israel by the mouth of Joshua : "every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon, that have I given unto you," Jos. i. 3.

Disciple.—Wretched unbelief ! which I cannot sufficiently deplore, since it has so long deprived me of the enjoyment of the salvation of my God. Henceforth, nothing shall turn me from the dear

and sole object of my affections.* Notwithstanding my unworthiness, I will accept of all his grace may bestow upon me. I will embrace the Author of my life and salvation, and ever cleave to him. Yes, Lord Jesus! thou art the only true and eternal friend of my sinful soul; to thee will I join myself in bands that nothing can sever; it is in thee, source of every grace, in thy holy sacrifice I seek reconciliation; it is in thy perfect merits I find righteousness, life, and salvation.

Pastor.—I bless God that you now consent to receive, as a pure grace, whatever he may be pleased to bestow upon you. It is what you have a long time refused to do. At first, you had great repugnance to acknowledge yourself to be a sinner; you were unwilling to suffer yourself to be stript of the filthy rags of your own righteousness; to take them from you was to deprive you of life; and while you gloried in them you refused to accept a better righteousness, the only true and acceptable in the sight of God.

Disciple.—Yes, Lord, since thou art so good to thy poor unworthy creature, I accept with humility and gratitude what thou art pleased to bestow upon me; and far from repelling the merciful hand that would bless, protect, heal, and save me, I will embrace it with tears of joy and tenderness. Now,

* See Matt. x. 37.

my Saviour, I *believe*, I *feel* that thou lovest me. It is in this firm assurance that I lay at thy feet my sins, my pretended virtues, my imaginary good works, my self-righteousness, and all the honours, pleasures, grandeur, and riches of this world, which I now regard as vanity, dung, and dross. What immensity of grace I discover in the word and work of my God! How great has my blindness been, when I could not see clearly in a path so luminous! Often has the Saviour drawn nigh to me in such a manner, that I had only to receive the grace he freely offered, but my unbelief and self-righteousness prevented me. O grace, grace, infinitely rich towards a worthless worm, I am confounded at thee; Lord, I am ashamed of the mistrust and sottish pride that have hitherto been an obstruction to my drawing out of the inexhaustible source of life, thou hast opened for poor sinners! O my compassionate Saviour! why do I not possess the power to love and bless thee as thou deservest? Why cannot my tongue express how sweet thou art to my soul, and convince all the world of the felicity enjoyed by a heart that believes in and possesses thee? *

Pastor.—You are indeed happy in thus believing. Henceforth the inhabitants of heaven†

* See Isa. xii. 3, and Rom. xv. 13; 1 Pet. i. 8; iv. 13.

† See Luke xv. 7.

will rejoice on account of you. No one will envy or murmur at your happy lot but the Pharisees, who suppose themselves to be the sole children of the kingdom, and exclude every body else, whilst it is only against themselves the door is shut. The world also will assail you with mockery and calumny. What do I say? Satan, the mortal enemy of souls, will roar like a lion, and hell itself will be moved at your conversion; but do not fear their anger; rather rejoice: it is enough for you that God loves you, and that your name is written in heaven. Be faithful and humble; persevere in the faith, and follow the Lamb where-soever he leads you.

Disciple.—My happiness is inexpressible, and I cannot sufficiently rejoice in my experience of the great salvation of my God. My heart is satiated with grace, so that I no longer feel any desire after the perishable things of this world; the greatest treasures of the earth are nothing in my eyes compared with the “unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Pastor.—The happy epoch at which you have arrived is the time of spiritual betrothing, in which the bridegroom of your soul communicates to you the spirit of joy, peace, and consolation, as the pledge of his love. It is, therefore, very natural that you should “rejoice in God your Saviour,” (Luke i. 47,) while the heavenly bridegroom so sen-

sibly affords you his presence. I, as "friend of the bridegroom," (John iii. 29,) partake of your joy ; but it is necessary for me to tell you, that you have not yet arrived at the blessed period of the marriage of the Lamb. The time will come, in which you will have need to be instructed in many things at the school of the Holy Spirit. In measure, as he conducts you more thoroughly into a knowledge of yourself, you will discover in your heart many sad and humbling things, many vices yet unknown, many hidden miseries, many spiritual maladies to heal, many pollutions to wash, many wounds to cleanse, secret pride to abase, infirmities to strengthen, and sins to pardon. The time will come, that you will even feel yourself so full of corruption, so devoid of all good, so miserable and unworthy, that you will hardly believe it possible that the Lord Jesus can love and acknowledge you for his disciple. This mass of corruption and accumulation of misery, may perhaps form such a cloud as will prevent your seeing, with open face, the amiable lineaments of your great Friend. The sense of your misery will weaken that of your peace and love. Then, like the Disciples, deprived of the bodily presence of their Master, you will weep and lament ; you will almost be tempted with the Daughters of Zion to say, "the Lord hath forsaken me." But remember then the Lord's

answer: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me," Isaiah xlix. 14—16. Yes, you have in your possession contained in his word, the treaty of alliance between him and yourself; the marriage contract with the eternal Bridegroom of your soul, expressed in these terms: "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord," Hos. ii. 19, 20. This promise has been sealed by the sprinkling of the blood of the Lord Jesus upon your conscience, and confirmed in your heart by his Spirit: nothing should stagger your faith. He has become the bridegroom of your soul: he espoused it when sinful, poor, naked, and "lying in its blood:" he has espoused it *for ever*. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" always powerful, always wise, always faithful, and always good.

The alliance he has contracted with you, was ratified before his supreme tribunal, the moment you delivered yourself up and was consecrated to him in conversion. There, in the presence of many millions of witnesses, the Lord Jesus obtained for

your sinful soul, by the merit of his death and intercession, an entire deliverance from death eternal: more than that, he has received your soul as a gift from the hands of his heavenly Father, and after having clothed it with his righteousness, has adopted it for his bride.

For the rest, you should constantly keep in mind, that the interval between the betrothing and the marriage, is not a time of mere speculation and contemplation, but of enjoyment; and at the same time, of exercise and preparation. During this period the soul walks no longer by *sight* but by *faith*. In order that you may persevere in faith, he will give you the spirit of *understanding*, *power*, and *consolation*. By these precious pledges of his love you will recognize his faithfulness, and they will render your life peaceable and happy.

Disciple.—Amen, Lord Jesus! may it be done unto me according to thy word.

Pastor.—Amen. May it be done unto you according to your faith. Amen.*

* The soul-travail so scripturally developed, under the guidance and instruction of an affectionate and faithful Pastor, in this Second Dialogue, may be thought legal by persons who place their reliance solely upon *doctrines*, and discard *experience* as imaginative. But the author has followed the example of his Divine Master, who commenced his public ministry, as recorded in the 5th chapter of St. Matthew; not by saying, "blessed are those who are

predestinated, chosen," &c. but "Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled," Matt. v. 4, 6. No doubt many were much comforted by these gracious declarations, on account of their suitability to their actual condition, of which they were competent judges ; but had the blessing been pronounced, upon the belief of what as yet they had had no *experimental* acquaintance with, so far from being consoled and encouraged, they would have been distressed and cast down. There have been and are many who, being enlightened, have, by aid of the written word, soared into the comprehension of the eternal decrees of the Most High. They have discovered the foundation, superstructure, and stability of the spiritual Temple, and even been transported with the description of its glory and design. But knowledge, though it be of things divine, is not always saving, Num. xxiv. 2—6 ; sometimes it "puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth," 1 Cor. viij. 1. Unless the soul be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and thus united to God in Christ, (Isaiah lvii. 15,) it cannot possibly "partake of the glory that shall be revealed," 1 Peter v. 1 ; and all knowledge, short of this saving and experimental knowledge, if rested in, must end in woful disappointment. It is better, far better to be conducted *into* the Temple through Solomon's Porch (conviction of sin by the Spirit of truth, John xvi. 7, 8, and 13,) than to be led by Satan up to its pinnacle.

DIALOGUE THE THIRD.

On establishment in the Faith, wherein is exhibited, *First*, the causes of the weakness of faith, and of relapses into unbelief. *Secondly*, the means by which faith is increased and established.

Zion says : "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

God replies : "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," Isaiah xlix. 14—16.

PASTOR.—What is the state of your heart? Do you enjoy the grace of God? Is the Lord Jesus your dearest object? Have you his indwelling presence? Are you established and happy in the faith which is in him?

Disciple.—Alas, Sir, I cannot say that I now enjoy this great happiness. It is true I have experienced something of it. When the Lord granted me the gift of faith and the pardon of my sins, my heart was inundated with joy. During many weeks I may say, I leaped with gladness. I experienced such great delights internally as were impossible

to express ; but latterly my state is altered ; I feel a certain inquietude, a something that pains and afflicts me. I no longer know where I am.

Pastor.—What you say is not at all surprising to me, my dear friend. The delights you have experienced were the sweets of first love. Those were the joyful days of your spiritual espousals : at present they are gone by, but you must not be less assured that the love of your faithful Saviour is always the same. Remember what he has said by the mouth of the Prophet ; “ The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,” Isa. liv. 10. In giving you to taste the sweetness of his grace, the Lord Jesus would convince you that there are in him greater blessings than the world can bestow upon you. Learn, then, to regard with indifference the grandeurs, riches, and pleasures of the earth, and desire earnestly those of heaven, “ looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith,” Heb. xii. 2. If only a single drop of this living water is able to restore your soul, what will it be when you shall be filled with the river of its pleasures ? I repeat to you, be careful of making light of these celestial comforts. It was the kiss of peace from the bridegroom of your soul ; it was

a grain of manna, a crumb of children's bread that your heavenly Father let fall from his table. If you persevere in the faith and in the communion of the Lord Jesus, he will again bestow upon you some portions of this exquisite food. From time to time he will come and renew the bonds of reciprocal love. Profit by these precious moments, but be careful not to prescribe to him in any thing. Too great an attachment to these sensible pleasures is displeasing to him, and dangerous for you; for if you were to make them the foundation of your faith, and if your peace of mind were to consist in them, your happiness would always be wavering and inconstant. These experimental delights may cease, without your ceasing to be a child of God; but your faith, confidence, and assurance of pardon, your attachment to the Saviour, all should remain firm and constant. Remember that we walk by faith, not by sight; and this faith sometimes conducts us, like Abraham, through paths in which we do not always see alike clearly. Often we would like better to pitch our tents upon Mount Tabor, in the continual enjoyment of sensible comforts, than to go to Calvary and simply cling to Jesus crucified. Nevertheless we are called to follow Jesus everywhere and in every state through which he passed. Besides, you would not wish to deprive yourself

of the return of these enjoyments by your own fault.

Disciple.—About a fortnight ago, in a moment of anger, there escaped me very improper expressions.* They proceeded from an involuntary impulse, from which I immediately recovered myself. I was so much confused at it, that from that day I have not dared to present myself before the Lord.

Pastor.—Your fault is great; but the false shame which has kept you at a distance from God, is a sin that renders you much more culpable in his eyes. Your first offence did not properly consist in the bad expressions you made use of, nor in the passion that produced them; all this is but the natural result and the just punishment of the infidelity of your heart. Your sin consisted in living at a distance from the Lord, ceasing to look towards him, and walking in his presence, in dependance upon his grace, and under the discipline of his Spirit. Being insensibly fallen into this sad state, when the enemy assailed and the world tempted you, your corrupt nature was willing to listen to them; you were without strength or power to resist and conquer them: they found

* It may be supposed that the expressions here alluded to were the murmuring offspring of a discontented unbelieving mind, under the hidings of the Lord's countenance; something like Jonah's, "I do well to be angry," Jonah iv. 9.

you out of your fortress; that is, separated from your Saviour, who says, "without me, ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. The second fault you have committed is, that being secretly convinced of your unbelief, either through shame, repugnance, or vexation, you neglected to flee again to your good Master as soon as you had lost sight of him. The more you remain at a distance from him, the greater your misery will be, and the more will the power of his grace diminish in you. Instead of fleeing from the Lord Jesus, like Cain or Judas, you should, with David and Peter, have sought him immediately, confessed your sin, and implored his pardon. I know how kind and compassionate he is; I am persuaded he would have pardoned your fault, and you would have suffered no more than if it had not been committed.

In such cases there are two evils to guard against; one is a levity of conduct, by which we are apt to allow of and pardon in ourselves faults, which ought to be sharply reprovèd; the other is carelessness or discouragement, which does not less offend the Saviour than the greatest sins, because he is our propitiation, and powerful "advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1. When his children fall he will not cast them off; he does not on that account withhold his grace, nor the covenant of his peace, Isa. liv. 10.

Disciple.—I have something more than weakness to lament; frequently I discover within me an enmity, which should not, I think, exist in a converted soul.

Pastor.—All the children of God, having still a body of sin, are sensible of the motions of concupiscence, in spite of themselves. If they did not perceive them they would be spiritually dead, and not be in a state to “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts,” Gal. v. 24. To commit sin is natural to a man that knows not the Saviour; but to feel sin, and immediately to have recourse to the Physician, appertains only to a repentant sinner. Luther says, “A man arrived at such a degree of holiness as neither to have nor perceive sin in himself, would be a phenomenon so rare, that the bells of all the churches should ring to invite everybody to come and see him.”

The children of God have a twofold nature, the Old Man and the New. They are the two contrary principles spoken of by the Apostle, in writing to the Galatians, chap. v. 17. They are two plants, each producing its appropriate fruits. The unconverted man has only a corrupt nature, from which continually proceed evil words and actions, Gen. vi. 5: the converted man still possesses something of this old nature; but what remains of

it is not the prevailing principle of his thoughts and actions: having become a new man in Christ, he has received, through faith, the seed of a new life; in his heart there is a fresh source, whose water is "springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. He has obtained a new nature, a hidden treasure, from whence he "bringeth forth good things," Matt. xii. 35. This principle, which is none other than the grace and life of Christ, becomes so predominant as to dry up the source of corruption, purify the heart, and stifle the disorderly inclinations of the flesh: but so soon as a child of God gets into remissness and carelessness, the instant he ceases to watch over himself and keep near the Lord, he feels his corrupt nature; it produces fresh fruits; from thence proceed the falls and sins into which he is insensibly drawn.

A frame essential to the children of God, is ever to preserve a feeling of their misery—a feeling by which the Holy Spirit keeps them in a state of humility, in order to conduct them, more thoroughly, into a knowledge of their impotence and corruption. In this the Holy Spirit does for us, as a good mother acts towards her children, to prevent their abandoning themselves to levity and negligence, which might degenerate into licentiousness. This is what the son of Sirach would

teach us, when he says, "the fear of the Lord is wisdom and instruction," Eccclus. i. 27. The fidelity of a good mother is such, that she neither spares education nor correction. "If ye endure chastening (says St. Paul,) God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons," Heb. xii. 7, 8. This discipline causes us to cleave, by faith, to the Lord Jesus, that we may preserve the enjoyment of his grace and love, and renders us attentive to the least deviation from his commands, by which we might fall; confessing every such deviation with humility, intreating pardon for it, and desiring to be more circumspect in future.

Disciple.—I cannot believe there can be in me a real amendment of life, and a deliverance from sin, while I feel sin in me, and see that it still exists in my heart. Pray tell me what you think of it.

Pastor.—You have been delivered and washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus Christ. If henceforth sin would condemn you, Jesus is present with you, who died for you, Rom. viii. 34; besides which, if sin would force you to obey it, under pretext that you formerly were its slave, you are no longer obliged to submit to its domi-

nion. Remember, you have shaken off its yoke, and that the Lord Jesus has ransomed and established you in the liberty of the children of God. You are no longer a slave, you are free; assert your rights. Sin neither can nor ought any longer to "reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lust thereof," Rom. vi. 12. If the old serpent attack you, dare to place your foot on his head, in the name of the Lord. Behold Jesus upon the cross; it is there sin has been expiated and vanquished; it is there it will lose its power, as the venom of the fiery serpents did, when the bitten Israelites cast their eyes upon the brazen serpent. As for perfect deliverance from all sin, it does not take place here below; but the children of God wait for it. So no more doubts, no more mistrust; believe, and nothing will be able to destroy your peace.

Disciple.—I confess that I am still subject to many unbelieving thoughts. I imagined, when I had once received the gift of faith, that it would not be obscured by clouds of doubt and unbelief.

Pastor.—It is with unbelief as with every other sin; for it is the greatest of all sins, and the principle from which they all proceed. It will return from time to time; but we should not on that account submit to it. What would be your conduct if you were tempted to think that God

would no longer grant you your daily bread, or if any other imagination still more criminal were to present itself to your mind? You would secretly groan under and be ashamed of it; you would implore the Lord's forgiveness and deliverance from an enemy no less dangerous than troublesome. Do the same when you feel disposed to doubt of the grace of God, and entertain distrustful suspicions of the Lord Jesus. Return to him immediately, humble yourself, groan, pray, weep; go, rekindle the smoking flax of your faith, and the flame of a love which is beginning to decline. He will manifest himself afresh to you, as a Saviour always faithful and pitiful. He will again arm you with the buckler of faith, and grant you grace to persevere, that you may not lose your confidence; but "strive for the faith of the Gospel," Phil. i. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 7; Heb. x. 35; Jude i.

That you may be convinced that the truly faithful are not always exempt from the sad returns of doubt and unbelief, read Psalm xxxi. 22, and Matt. xiv. 31. Doctor *Scriver* says, that the feeling of our unbelief, when we groan under it, is a sign that we possess faith; and that he never knew a true believer who did not complain of the weakness of his faith. "Impenitent sinners," says he, "imagine that they have true faith, and deceive themselves; repentant sinners, on the contrary,

are sometimes tempted to think they do not possess it when they do." In this respect experience confirms the testimony of all the pious men who have written on the subject. They observe, that the doctrines of faith are most earnestly contended for and insisted upon by those persons who complain most of the weakness of their own faith. Why so? Because man, in his state of natural blindness and security, is not sensible that he wants true faith; but when the truths of the Gospel are proclaimed to him in their simplicity and clearness; when Jesus Christ crucified, the great object of faith, is presented to his view, then only he perceives how great his unbelief is, how far from possessing that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. In fine, the perception the children of God have of the weakness of their faith, constitutes part of the suffering they carry about with them all their days; and which, preserving in them humility, self-diffidence, and dependence upon grace, obliges them incessantly to have recourse to it: but they never permit unbelief and mistrust to prevail in their hearts; but, profiting by the counsel of godly men; as soon as any doubt or evil thought arises within them; without attempting, in their own strength, to overcome it, they turn their thoughts towards Jesus;

and the instant they again apprehend him, the clouds disperse to make way for serenity, and they return into the bosom of peace.

Disciple.—I have, nevertheless, heard pious persons declare, that from the time a soul has received the assurance of pardon, it is for ever delivered from all such attacks of mistrust and unbelief.

Pastor.—The persons you allude to deceived themselves, or you have misunderstood them. No one is entirely freed from such attacks, but they cannot mislead the soul or stagger its faith. An unconverted man may persuade himself that he possesses true faith, and in that persuasion be lulled to sleep, notwithstanding the secret warnings by which the Spirit of God seeks to convince him of the contrary. But a man really converted receives a more certain assurance: "The Holy Spirit bears witness to his spirit," (1 John v. 10,) dissipates all his doubts, and brings serenity and peace into his heart. Should the enemy of souls try to contest with him the grace of his adoption, he is not surprised, and is at no loss to silence him. He knows that the same thing happened to the Son of God. Hardly had he received this testimony from his Father, "this is my beloved Son," (Matt. iii, 17,) than the tempter approached and disputed with him that title. This enemy, after having attacked

the head, will also assault the members; but Jesus hath conquered; and "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," Rom. viii. 37. When a sinner has received by faith the seal of his pardon, the enemy is envious and the world is jealous of him. These two adversaries beset him with assault upon assault. They are never more to be feared than when they insinuate into the heart the poison of self-love, self-esteem, and spiritual pride; or when they try to allure by the attraction of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world. He who suspects nothing, and thinks himself sufficiently strong to preserve himself, is in great danger of being seduced; but he who watches over himself and clings to the Saviour by faith, is protected from surprise and danger of falling,

Disciple.—I have experienced something of a like nature. Sometimes, I have been tempted to think that the work of my conversion was only a mere imagination; at other times that I had lost every thing I had received, and that it was necessary that I should begin afresh.

Pastor.—Your great business is to preserve yourself in the grace you have already received. If you should fall into any fault, do not suppose that you must begin anew on account of it; no, in order to receive fresh grace and pardon, it is enough that, impressed with a lively sorrow, you

should throw yourself at the feet of Jesus. By prayer you will obtain every thing from him; and when he has granted you the joy of his salvation, receive it with humility and simplicity, as a renewed pledge of his love, and an additional motive to believe in and love him.

Disciple.—I firmly believe that God, has, for the sake of Jesus Christ, pardoned my sins; but I entertain a doubt whether he may have pardoned those I have committed since my conversion.

Pastor.—It is true that the faults, even the least, which we commit after our conversion, displease the Lord more than the greatest sins we have been guilty of in our state of blindness; notwithstanding, it is also true that the Lord is not weary of being gracious. Besides the pardon of all sin, without exception, solemnly granted in conversion, he has an abundance of daily pardons for his children. The Lord, who knows our weakness, is aware that we need every day forgiveness; or what would become of us, if after having remitted all the rest of our sins, there should still remain a single one he refused to pardon? It is not without reason the Saviour has permitted, nay commanded, us to pray for the remission of our sins as often as we ask for our daily bread. The Spirit of God assures us that the Saviour "has received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also,"

Psalm lxxviii. 18. Learn from thence not to doubt of the grace of the Lord, but to have recourse to it unceasingly, with a sincere confidence.

Disciple.—I am convinced of what you say; yet I am apt to complain of my misery.

Pastor.—No one can think it strange that a repentant sinner should groan under a feeling of his misery; but continual complaints, occasioned by mistrust and despondency, do not become a soul that knows its Saviour and has experienced the power of his grace. Nothing is more natural than to feel your misery, and nothing more profitable: Lament your misery; I do not object to it: but lament it to Jesus; with a filial confidence. Lament it, if you like, to a man enlightened and experienced in the ways of grace; lament it, if so disposed, to a poor afflicted timorous soul, whom you would console, in order that it may be assured that it is not the only one in the world burthened with sorrow; but be careful not to lament it to the children of this world, who have never known or felt their lost condition. Such people, instead of turning it to their own advantage, will take occasion from it to discover their malignity against you, and all the children of God. They will even scandalize Christianity, under pretext that it produces nothing in man but what is sad and grievous, which is absolutely false. I do not counsel you

either to make known your griefs to false disciples, to self-righteous persons, who have only the shell and appearance of godliness, and would think it a scandal to be seated in Paradise by the side of poor sinners. Such would not fail to thrust you from them, and augment your inquietude. By spreading your complaints every where, you would fall into another evil; you would reflect upon your Lord; for to complain is in a manner to accuse him of being hard and inexorable. Besides, faith does not evidence itself by the consideration of ourselves alone; it makes Jesus its principal object. John the Baptist said to those he addressed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" To turn our regards from him, and fix them only upon our miseries, is to give place to unbelief, and to deprive ourselves of all strength and succour. Be upon your guard, then, my dear friend, against this disposition, and let your dearest and only object be *Jesus crucified*.

Disciple.—The advice you give is indeed evangelical; but in following it, should I not risk falling into security?

Pastor.—It seems you have ill conceived my meaning. I do not advise you ever to lose sight of your misery, God protect you and me from so doing; but I am desirous that you should avoid those continual reflections upon your past sins, and those misplaced lamentations which are accom-

panied by inquietude and mistrust. Remember, there are two paths equally dangerous that cause us to err from the straight road the Gospel marks out. One is a legal and servile fear, always mixed with distrust; the other a proud security, which tends to levity of mind, and from thence to licentiousness. When we deviate from the simple path of the gospel, it is easy to get into one or the other of these two extremes. He who is desirous of continually feeling his misery and suffering, imagines he has need of such a counterpoise to preserve him from negligence and spiritual pride; on the contrary, a presumptuous spirit thinks he is well disposed, because he does not feel mistrust and despondency. The sure and right way is to walk in simplicity, accompanied by humility and poverty of spirit. Thus, let him become poor in spirit who presumes too much upon his own strength; and let him who sins by doubt and mistrust, supplicate the Lord for the assurance he stands in need of.

Disciple.—As you have mentioned these fatal relapses, have the goodness to point out the means of avoiding them.

Pastor.—The best and only way is to cleave by faith to him, who is the author of your salvation and the source of your felicity, and carry on with him a simple and continual intercourse of

heart. By that you will prevent the wanderings that have a tendency to unhappy relapses, security; or false confidence, spiritual pride, and the abuse of evangelical liberty.

Security, parent of lukewarmness and remissness, is a most dangerous state, into which not only such as have been lightly affected by grace may fall, but also those who have obtained the gift of faith and the assurance of their reconciliation. Instead of the grace already received, serving as an incentive to our further advancement into the knowledge of the Lord, we too often fall into a hurtful security. This proceeds from poor souls ceasing to watch over themselves, and being negligent of a prayerful intercourse with God, and meditation upon his word. By degrees the Scriptures become insipid; they neglect other opportunities of instruction and edification, and unconsciously fall into lukewarmness and insensibility. If, from time to time, the Spirit of God touches their consciences by salutary reproofs, they oppose to these convictions, their knowledge, information, the long experience they have had of all that can be said to them; they despise the charitable warnings of the servants of God, and other good people; they are thus continually propelled down the precipice and sink lower and lower; and, as it is easier to descend

than to rise, they come to the conclusion, that the blood of Christ is not sufficiently efficacious to "purge the conscience from dead works;" and that it is impossible that the peace of God should always be preserved in the heart. Thus faith is weakened; zeal abates; the heart becomes insensible, spiritual life decays, and in the end they attain to a state of drowsiness, not far removed from spiritual death. They are neither cold nor hot; they are not enemies to what is good; but they cannot say they love it: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth," Rev. iii. 16.

I counsel you, then, to cleave incessantly to the Lord Jesus; to attend as often as you can to reading of and meditation upon the Holy Scriptures. The word of God, says a prophet, is a fire, and no one can approach it with a heart properly disposed, without being warmed by its heat. Neglect no opportunity of edification, either public or private: avoid as much as possible, consistently with duty and decorum, intercourse with worldly men, and court the society of the children of God. You will know them by their fruits: "whosoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God," and calls upon his name with sincerity of heart, "departs from iniquity." Prayer and heart intercourse

with the Lord, are absolutely necessary. From them we always derive renewed strength and fresh blessings.

As for spiritual pride, it only exists in those who have never felt the greatness of their misery, nor experienced the lively compunction always attendant upon it. From thence proceeds the good opinion they entertain of themselves, and which is augmented by any gracious attractions they may have experienced. With much study, they have not learned of the Saviour to become "meek and lowly in heart;" they deceive themselves, and, like the Pharisees, imagine themselves to be the first in the kingdom of God. This dangerous vice naturally leads to another—contempt of our neighbour, and that even of persons truly godly, whom we are prone to regard as new converts, while, with Diotrophes, we think ourselves pre-eminent. Like Peter, we forget our great weakness, and presume too much upon our own strength; in the greatest poverty we think ourselves rich, and fall into temerity.

Again, from thence proceed that *false peace* in which we are apt to lull ourselves, as if we had attained to the desired end; that *spiritual blindness*, which prevents our seeing in ourselves faults apparent to persons the least enlightened; that *false liberty*, by which we permit in our-

selves things sinful, and consequently incompatible with the character of a child of God; in fine, that *self-love*, accompanied by *self-sufficiency* and haughtiness, which casts a veil over our own faults and causes us pitilessly to judge, blame and condemn others; and that, while we often proudly reject reproofs, well founded and urged in the spirit of meekness and charity. To what do all the monstrous evils tend that spiritual pride gives birth to? Solomon says, "before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility," Prov. xviii. 12. Lucifer, for desiring to raise himself above the other angels, was precipitated into the bottomless pit. Those who tread in his steps expose themselves to a like danger. This danger is so much the greater, because it is not in the power of men to humble themselves; for that, nothing less will do than the omnipotent hand of God. Happy indeed if the thunder of his law * should humble them in the season of grace, before they fall to rise no more!

Disciple.—I have known persons such as you describe, but they gave another name to their spiritual pride; they called it *the assurance of faith*.

Pastor.—Their pretended assurance is only a

* See Gal. iii. 19.

phantom of faith, which differs as much from true assurance as darkness from light. True faith is always accompanied by an entire renunciation of *self*, self-righteousness, self-glory—all confidence in self. The more faith, the more poverty of spirit. The man spiritually poor sees nothing in himself but weakness and misery; feels that he has nothing, knows nothing, and can do nothing of himself; but he is rich in faith, because he possesses in Jesus Christ an inexhaustible store of wisdom, righteousness, understanding, and strength. This is the foundation of true assurance and the source of true contentment. This is the security of a child of God; which prevents his being misled. As a tree which the Father has planted, and the Holy Spirit has grafted into Christ, he becomes more and more deeply rooted in the soil of humility, while he grows, flourishes, fructifies, and shoots his branches upwards towards heaven. Such is the description of him who is truly a man in Christ. Like Saint Paul, he knows “how to be abased” by humility, and “how to abound” by faith, *Phill. iv. 2.* “When thou wast little in thine own sight,” said Samuel to Saul, “wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?” *1 Samuel xv. 17.* Awakened souls have yet another evil to shun, which is *the abuse of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.* While some deviate from the right course, by being desirous of

doing too much, others depart from it by doing too little. An efficacious and lively faith marks out a track between these two extremes. It says to us, "this is the way, walk ye in it," Isaiah xxx. 31. We are not here speaking of natural men, who abuse the doctrines of the Gospel, that they may live in licentiousness, under the pretext that we are justified and saved by pure grace, without any works or merits of our own. The persons whom we would preserve from this abuse, are already really converted. To the extent they may attend to the reasonings of the flesh, they may argue thus: "Since our works and endeavours have no merit before God, what necessity can there be for vigilance so constant, application so serious, and fidelity so scrupulous? Since grace abounds over everything, we may conform to the customs of the world with impunity; we may indulge in many little things which have the appearance of evil, as our consciences do not tell us they are sinful." Those who hold this language prove themselves to be again entangled in the snare of the enemy. In neglecting to watch over themselves, and walking in the presence of God, ever looking unto Jesus, they have insensibly withdrawn from the discipline of the Spirit of God and follow their own spirit. By degrees they have got into a false liberty; the old man has begun to revive and resume his former

strength; the passions are awakened, and that which at first was only a spark, is become a fire which cannot be extinguished. Covetousness and concupiscence are generally the rocks on which such persons make shipwreck. Nothing can preserve us from them, nothing can quench the fire of the passions or dethrone the power of sin, but the virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Let this warn us to be on our guard. We are not called to amass treasures, to be ambitious of honours, to feed upon worldly vanities, to live in luxury and sensuality. We are called to be children of God, and to demean ourselves as such in all things, to walk uprightly as becomes the Gospel of Christ. O my dear Friend, how dangerous it is to fall into remissness, and stop short in the ways of salvation! How many pillars, like Lot's wife, are to be found between Sodom and Zoar? How many of these sad monuments of unbelief and love of the world are to be seen in Christendom! These examples prove the danger of looking back, after having "put the hand to the plough," Luke ix. 62.

Disciple.—What you say makes me tremble; but pray tell me how I may be preserved from such evils?

Pastor.—I have already told you: the only and infallible means of avoiding these rocks, is to per-

severe in the faith by vigilance and prayer. Whoever cleaves constantly to the Lord Jesus, and carries on with this good Saviour a continual intercourse of the heart, is sure to make rapid progress in grace and sanctification. You know that the word of God ascribes to faith an invincible power, capable of doing and surmounting everything. Consider faith as a mystic plant, rooted in Christ, living upon his life, and nourished by his divine sap. The weaker this plant is the less fruit it bears, and the less able to resist the storms of temptations and the torrents of the passions; the stronger it is, the more fruitful and better able to withstand the tempest. Faith does not exempt us from the exposure to different trials, but it supports us under them. One of the principal advantages it procures us, is the preserving us from lukewarmness, mistrust, presumption, and self-glory. When the Saviour gives the believer the assurance of his love, the latter, far from being puffed up with it, feels and acknowledges that he is unworthy of it. In this frame he enjoys the peace of God and true contentment, and is then above the temptations of the world. The world appears too insignificant, its pleasures too insipid, its grandeur and riches, the idols of worldly men, too vile to attract his devotion. The precious pearl of the Gospel—the grace of God in Christ Jesus, the

love of this faithful Saviour, the enjoyment of his merits, the assurance of his salvation—these are the treasures faith apprehends and possesses, and which cause the believer to condemn everything else. By faith we travel through this world as strangers and pilgrims, without meddling with its defiling allurements. Should the dust cleave to our feet we hasten to shake it off, and flee to him whose blood purifies from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

Since, my dear friend, you appear disposed to profit by my advice, I counsel you to watch carefully over the misery and corruption your nature is infected with ; and likewise over the work of grace the Lord has wrought in your heart, in order that you may clearly discern between the fruits of nature and the fruits of faith. Nature gives free course to worldly thoughts, it feeds upon ideas of grandeur, riches, and pleasures, and in this way generally insinuates a subtle poison into the heart. Grace is directly opposed to nature, and you will perceive that it dwells in you ; that the new man is formed in your soul ; that the Lord is advancing in you the work of grace, when your thoughts are constantly attracted towards Jesus ; when they are accompanied by joy, consolation, confidence, love and gratitude for all God has done, and is still,

doing for you ; when you lend an attentive ear to the instructions and admonitions the Lord addresses to you, externally by his word and internally by his spirit.

For your greater security, attentively watch over the disposition of your constitutional temperament; is it anger, avarice, pride, or voluptuousness that principally sways you? In a town, the weakest places are those on which a double guard is placed. In like manner, be most watchful over prevailing sins. Ever let these enemies find you near the Lord; then our faith has only, as it were, one step to make, one sigh, one leap towards the Saviour, and we find in him a sure retreat. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe," Prov. xviii. 10. The Lord himself conducts our warfare, "he fights against them that fight against us," (Ps. xxxv. 1,) and daily fulfils the promise made by Moses to the Israelites, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace," Ex. xiv. 4. With regard to this combat, remember it is not our natural strength that can maintain it and gain the victory: the Christian fights by faith and prayer. Saint Paul, writing to Timothy, says, "fight the good fight of faith." As long as we try to maintain the conflict by our own power, the enemy mocks us and we are worsted. But if we be clad in the

armour described by Saint Paul in Ephesians with, we come off conquerors.

We ought neither to fear nor despise too much the enemy of our souls. To consider the power of Satan and his complots as invincible, is mistrust and unbelief; it is to deliver ourselves into the enemy's hands, bound hand and foot; while faith would enable us to tread upon the serpent and trample the dragon under our feet. To regard these enemies with contempt, as weak and little formidable, is imprudence, presumption, and temerity; what they cannot effect by force they will try to accomplish by stratagem. Therefore we should be continually on our guard: as soon as the least evil thought presents itself, let us not neglect to flee unto the Lord. Here I repeat what I have before said: instead of boldly attacking the enemy, it is safer to avoid every opportunity of sinning, and turn our eyes and thoughts from every seducing object towards a crucified Saviour. In this respect a prudent retreat is better than a vigorous attack. As the Prophet Micah says, "The breaker is come up before them, they have broken up and have passed through the gate and are gone out by it; and their king shall pass before them and the Lord on the head of them."

Disciple.—You have touched upon a subject concerning which I am not a little solicitous; for

I comprehend not only the necessity but also the difficulty of persevering to the end.

Pastor.—In this as in every other respect we must not depend upon ourselves, but upon the merits and fidelity of our all-sufficient Saviour. If we had no support but our own wisdom and strength, our fall would be inevitable. Besides, our faithfulness does not so much consist in constraining ourselves to be faithful, as in cleaving by faith unto the Lord and reposing entirely upon his fidelity. “He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able;” and “his strength will be made perfect in our weakness.” But in order to experience the happy effects of his great fidelity, it is necessary that, in small matters as well as in great, we should remain under the salutary discipline of his Holy Spirit; it is his Spirit that must enlighten, conduct, and seal us “unto the day of redemption.” This discipline is the sacred bond that attaches us to Christ, and guides our feet unto his paths. Depend upon him, and “the power of God will keep you through faith unto salvation,” 1 Peter i. 5; “no man shall pluck you out of his hand,” John x. 28. He will accomplish in you this promise, “Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; and even to your old age

I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made and I will bear ; even I will carry and will deliver you," Isa. xlv. 3, 4.

Disciple.—How consoling ! These sweet words are spirit and life to my soul, and I never should be weary of hearing them.

Pastor.—For myself, I cannot think of the paternal kindness of our God towards such poor vile worms, without shedding tears. In Jesus we are blessed with every blessing, so that all things are ours. We are his, and he is ours, for he is given to us by the Father ; in him we possess all things. Have we not now reason to say with Saint John. " Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John' iii. 1, 2. As children of God we are absolved, sanctified, and blessed, so that there is no condemnation to us. The accuser's mouth is stopped, because the Son of God in redeeming us has stripped him of all right and power over us. While we persevere in the faith, sin, death, the world, and the devil cannot hurt us. We enjoy the peace, grace, and love of God. His Word assures us of it, and his Spirit bears witness in our hearts to it. We are the children of God, citizens of heaven. True, in the eyes of the world we are mean despicable creatures ;

but the Bride of the King of kings is internally ornamented, and her clothing is the righteousness and holiness of Jesus. As to the spots and wrinkles that remain, his blood cleanses and effaces them. While yet below he impresses upon our foreheads the seal of the living God ; he clothes us with the *nuptial robe*, and in covering us with this spotless raiment, which is washed in the blood of the Lamb, he adorns us with the spirit of meekness, patience, and love, that we may more and more resemble himself. On this account it does not grieve us to “forget our father’s house,” Psalm xlv. 10 ; that is to say, to renounce the pleasures and vanities of the world. We are amply recompensed for this sacrifice by the sweet consolations the Gospel bestows—consolations unknown to worldly men, and which faith alone procures the enjoyment of. The life of believers, the Apostle says, is a *hidden life*; enveloped in contempt, opprobrium, and suffering, accompanied by misery and weakness ; but it is a “life hid with Christ in God” until the day of manifestation. The children of God know that the Son of God is their Saviour ; that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their Father, and that is sufficient. They can say with confidence, the Almighty and Eternal God is my Father ; the sovereign Judge of every creature is my adorable Master, my faithful Friend, my tender Brother.

Henceforth to them death has lost all its terrors; though the shades of death should encompass them, the earth should fade away from under their feet, and the sky and the stars should fall, they would not be terrified; it would be the hour of their deliverance, the signal of the coming of their Redeemer. They would exclaim, Behold him, who for love of me died upon the cross! I know him by his wounds. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Psalm cxviii. 26.

I am not willing to conclude this conversation without giving you some further advice. I am desirous of seeing you delivered from the spirit of bondage, the badge of those who live under the servitude of the law; and wish instead of this legal piety, it was given you to enter into what Saint James styles "the law of liberty;" to live in that intimate communion with the Saviour, in that simple, child-like, and continual intercourse of the heart which constitutes the happiness of the children of God and their paradise upon earth. This is the reign of God within us, which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

These blessings are the portion of those who persevere in the communion of the Lord Jesus, and in the doctrines of the Gospel. In them they find, in prosperity and adversity, an inexhaustible

source of life, strength, and happiness. The child of God possesses this advantage, that neither poverty, sickness, nor any external calamity can prevent his being happy. His clothing is the righteousness with which the Son of God has covered him; the balm which heals and restores his soul, the blood of Christ; his internal guide, the Holy Spirit; his consolation, the oil of gladness poured into his heart. The enjoyment of these precious gifts brings tranquillity into his soul, and sheds serenity over his countenance. In this state, he walks as a child of light in the midst of a perverse generation; and with a heart full of filial confidence, he dares continually to present himself before his God, and call upon him as his true and loving Father.

This blessed condition will likewise be yours, my dear Friend, if you cleave to the Lord. And when you are so established by grace, that this state of mind becomes fixed and habitual, you will readily regard with an eye of contempt all that is called great and pompous in the world. When the enemy points you to "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," to tempt you to desire them, your faith will give you the victory over him. Humbled as a poor sinner under the Omnipotent hand of God, and at the same time raised above the perishable things of this life, you will

regard them as unworthy of your ambition. In fine, the inheritance of the children of God is a treasure so rich and inestimable, that he who has had the foretaste of it and hopes to enjoy it eternally, feels nothing but disgust for the husks on which the children of this world feed. He says, with the sage, "*Cum cœlum aspicio, sordent terrestria;*" when I contemplate the heavens, all is vile upon the earth. Like Moses, he "esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," Heb. xi. 26.

While the grace of adoption will cause you to despise the transitory things of this life, the great salvation of the Lord Jesus will attach you more firmly to the God of your salvation. The mercy he has shewn to you, the chief of sinners; the support he unceasingly affords you; the daily favours he bestows upon you, will all operate as powerful motives to love him more and more; to praise him continually; to avoid carefully everything displeasing to him; and to proclaim to your brethren his goodness, and all the benefits he has done unto your soul. You will have every day fresh cause for profitable meditation, and in giving yourself up to this sweet occupation, you will be preserved from the vain and evil thoughts to which a distracted mind is liable. Your faith will become more established, and your love for and gratitude

to the Lord continually augment. To this end, nothing is more efficacious than the contemplation of the great love which led the Son of God to immolate himself in our room. In these views we exclaim, O Daughters of Sion, how amiable is Jesus in his passion! how touching, how ineffable is his love! the man of sorrows has ravished my heart!

Those who firmly believe that Jesus is their Lord and their God, their Friend and their Saviour, cannot be insensible to the love this tender and faithful Bridegroom of souls has manifested towards them; and the lively impression this stupendous love makes upon them, will necessarily have an influence over all their actions. They will say with David, "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm cxix. 32. The faith which apprehends the grace of God, and enables us continually to enjoy it, manifests itself in praises to the Author of our salvation: with the Psalmist we exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," Psalm ciii. 2.

If, then, any sorrow should overtake you, either on account of some disastrous event, or from a view of your many miseries, seek your consolation only in the great love God has manifested towards you in Jesus Christ. When everything conspires

against you, remember you have in heaven an Almighty and merciful God, a faithful Saviour who has elected you, received you by his grace, and sealed you with his Spirit. Can anything more be wanting to make you "rejoice in hope" and "patient in tribulation;" Rom. vii. 12.

If it be true, as I desire to believe, that you are in the enjoyment of the graces I have described, henceforth it only remains that you should determine, in the strength of the Lord, to cleave constantly and for ever to your Saviour whatever may happen to you. Yes, though you should be deprived of what you hold most dear in the world, and even of his internal consolations, nothing ought to shake your confidence in the promises of God. You should say with Job, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15.

This, my dear Friend, is what I have earnestly desired to say to you, agreeably to the experience I have myself had in the ways of God, and according to the measure of grace dispensed to me. Perhaps I have unconsciously intermixed with it something of human science and reason. If so, I disavow it and condemn myself; my intention being to hold fast and conduct my brethren by the pure truth of the Gospel, and the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Upon him, upon his omnipotent grace, in my greatest weakness I rely. It is not

lightly nor proudly, but in humble dependance upon his mercy that I say, if I had a thousand worlds, and a thousand lives, I would willingly sacrifice them all for him who has loved me more than his life. Nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus; I will not quit him,* and he will not abandon me. Amen.

Amen, O Lord Jesus, adorable !
 Thy precious blood redeem'd me;
 Thou art my Saviour, amiable.
 Amen, Amen, in verity !

* See Ex. xxi. 5, 6 ; and Deut. xv. 16, 17

DIALOGUE THE FOURTH.

IN WHICH THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION
IS TREATED OF.

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God,” Gal. ii. 19—21.

DISCIPLE.—Thanks be to God, I experience in my heart the power and reality of what I have before heard from you ; and I am now desirous that you should say something to me on the subject of sanctification.

Pastor.—In complying with your wish, I shall commence by leading you back to its source, which is faith ; for as soon as the heart is animated by true faith sanctification follows of itself. The blessed Luther has excellently said, “There is no occasion to command faith to do good works, because before we have spoken we find they are already done.” In fact, such is faith in the soul, and such its power and influence to a holy and

Christian life. From thence it was that believers of old performed such great things, and the primitive Christians attained so high a degree of sanctification. According to St. Paul, to live in sanctification is nothing more than to live by faith, or what is the same thing, to live by the grace of God in Jesus Christ; or if you will, it is to live in daily repentance and faith, until we arrive at the gates of a happy eternity. These two graces, repentance and faith, constitute the essence of sanctification. Faith gives birth to charity and every other virtue, 2 Peter i. Repentance and faith go hand in hand, and mutually aid each other. By faith we daily advance in amendment of life, because we discover every day fresh imperfections in ourselves. Repentance, on its part, exercises faith, inasmuch as it leads us to the Saviour, to obtain from him the pardon and strength we have need of. Repentance consists in crucifying the flesh, in dying more and more unto sin, the world, and ourselves, Gal. v: 6; Rom. viii chap.; 2 Cor. v: 15. Repentance, in the first instance, is a general discovery of, and a painful feeling arising from, the mass of corruption within us. Daily repentance is produced by the remains we successively discover of that corruption in ourselves, and which the grace of God enables us more and more clearly to perceive; for it is with us as with

a traveller, who at the break of day only sees objects confusedly, but discovers them more distinctly as the sun rises above the horizon. These fresh discoveries advance us in sanctification, by humbling us and obliging us perpetually to have recourse to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. They make us sigh after the glorious liberty of the children of God; they continually render us more humble, more devoted, more established in faith, more serious, more vigilant, more sincere, more zealous, and more desirous of being washed in the blood of Christ. A delightful and unreserved confidence in the Lord elevates and supports us; we advance daily more into the mystery of the atonement, and daily receive fresh assurances of pardon, and experience the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ upon our hearts and consciences. Firmly attached to the friend of our souls, we every day receive proofs of the love of our God, and renewed experience of the happiness of living under his faithful and paternal discipline. It is thus we make progress in sanctification. What the law cannot accomplish in us, the grace of the Gospel produces; whoever possesses the hope of one day resembling the Lord, "purifieth himself even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3.

Here there are two precautions to attend to: the first, is not to imagine that we have attained

to so high a degree of perfection, that there is no further progress to make or danger to apprehend. The true disciple of holiness recommences his lesson every day, with the article of repentance. So soon as he loses sight of his natural misery, he ceases to be sound in faith; his light is obscured; he is no longer conducted by the divine unction. The *second* precaution is, not to leave the simple path of the Gospel, which is an economy of love and filial fear, to replace ourselves under the law, which is one of torment and servile bondage. It is for this reason St. Paul exhorts us not to "cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward," Heb. x. 35.

I will tell you in few words what is the life of a child of God. It consists in passing his days in the faith of the Son of God. It is not a dead faith like that of the worldly minded; it is a living faith, which is seated not in the memory or imagination, but in the heart; a faith, accompanied by love and charity, that influences the will and controls all the faculties of the soul; a faith that begets an aversion to every appearance of evil, surmounts every doubt and scruple, and triumphs over every obstacle; in fine, a faith that soars into the paternal bosom and merciful heart of our God, apprehends Jesus Christ and embraces his merits; that makes grace more valuable than life and every-

thing in the world, because it procures us the peace of God and true contentment. It is from this faith, *which draws out of the plenitude of Christ*, that sanctification is derived. Saint Paul knew it by experience, and was therefore desirous of living only "by the faith of the Son of God."

This life of faith includes the two following dispositions: *first*, to live "by faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us;" *secondly*, not to live by ourselves nor for ourselves, but that the Lord Jesus should live and reign in us.

With respect to the first disposition, the grace of reconciliation is the principle by which the whole conduct of a child of God is regulated. The moment wherein true Christianity becomes established in the heart, is that in which sinful man receives by faith pardon and remission of his sins. So long as we remain without the assurance of pardon, we cannot truly confide in God; but as soon as we have received this assurance, we feel disposed and at liberty to place our whole confidence in him, and can live in his sight as dear children—this is the life of faith. As the children of this world live in worldly pleasures, and love to plunge into them as their proper element; so the children of God find their life in the enjoyment of salvation. It is the great spring of their thoughts, conversation, and actions. The knowledge of

Christ, of what he has done for us and is to us, does not make us idle. . . It disposes us to do all we can for him. We do not do it to merit a recompense, but consider it our happiness to be able to do anything acceptable to him we love and by whom we are loved. With St. Paul and David, one says, "I believed, therefore have I spoken," Psalm cxvi. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 13; it is on that account I love, pray, act, do good, and avoid evil.

The child of God is careful to keep his heart in its right place—the bosom of Jesus. It is there he lives in spirit, not to lodge as a passing stranger, but to dwell as a child at home. "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs," Can. ii. 14. . .

As children of God we have passed from Mount Sinai to Mount Sion; from the servitude of the law to the liberty. Christ has purchased for us by his death. "My brethren," says St. Paul, "ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ," Rom. vi. 4. We are thus made "free from the law;" that is to say, we no longer live in a state of servile fear but under the sweet influences of grace. We are "dead to the law" in several respects: *First*, as regards *justification*, because the law cannot condemn him who is in Jesus Christ. . . On the contrary, we are absolved, consoled by the word of the Gospel, and upheld by the Spirit of

God against every accusation of the law. *Secondly*, as it respects *sanctification*, because it is no longer the fear of damnation that makes us avoid evil and do good, as when under the law, but the spirit of adoption and filial love. From a feeling of love to the Lord Jesus we obey the holy commandments of God: they "are not grievous" to us, as St. John says; it is a privilege, a joy to observe them: all which is the natural effect of faith and the production of grace. In this manner the children of God are freed from the yoke under which they laboured; "for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor," Isaiah ix. 4. The people of God are made "willing in the day of his power," Psalm cx. 3; and this is what the Apostle styles "obedience to the faith," Rom. ii. 5. *Finally*, we are dead to the law, inasmuch as we do not glory in any good works we are enabled to perform, in conformity to its precepts. We ask with the Apostle, "where is glorying? It is excluded." We do not glory in, nor attribute any merit to ourselves; we do not build upon our own foundation, nor depend upon our own works, however apparently good they may be. Yet, far from falling into remissness, we apply ourselves sincerely to do all the good in our power; and when it is done, instead of depending upon it, we attribute to ourselves whatever of imperfection and

impurity may cleave to it, and humble ourselves before God on account of it. It is faith alone that supports us. We know in whom we have believed, and his grace is sufficient. We do not, therefore, reject either the law or grace, we establish both; and if any one, with St. James, say, "show us your faith by your works," we are content not to be considered true Christians, but as we bear the image of Christ, and our conduct is conformable to his Gospel. No, we cannot with justice be accused of rejecting the law. We agree with St. Paul, that "the law is good if a man use it lawfully," 1 Tim. i. 8. It is good, since by it comes "the knowledge of sin;" and it is "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," Rom. iii. 20; Gal. iii. 24.

From what has been said, we may conclude that the blessed Luther was right in asserting, that sanctification is an application and appropriation of the redemption, wrought out by Jesus Christ, with all the benefits purchased by his sufferings and death; an application communicated by grace and received by faith. To live in sanctification, then, is to live in the faith of the Son of God; and wherever this faith is sincere, it is productive of love and all kinds of good works. The foundation, as well as the great mystery of godliness, is "God manifest in the flesh," in the person of Jesus Christ, that he might save sinners by the shedding of his

blood. The soul that by faith is partaker of this reconciliation, is delivered from the aversion to and indifference for divine things it formerly experienced. It receives the desire and the strength to walk in the ways of the Lord. Doubtlessly its prayers, psalm-singing, praises, all its performances, are accompanied by weakness and imperfection; yet, notwithstanding, the Father deigns to accept them for the sake of his well-beloved Son. O how sweet and blessed is the life of faith! Condescend, Lord, to advance and establish us in it more and more by thy grace!

I have yet a few observations to make concerning the purity of faith. By what outward marks may we perceive that persons have not a right understanding of the mystery of salvation—that they do not live by faith, and make a good use of the grace of God in Jesus Christ? *First*, when they build and depend upon their own works, virtue, and piety. *Secondly*, when fallen into the other extreme, they neglect to do good and live remissly, under pretext that good works are not meritorious and cannot save us. *Thirdly*, when by means of reproaches, censures, exhortations, menaces, and impracticable rules, they expect to constrain natural men to convert themselves and live piously. *Fourthly*, when they regard as a good deed every action that is externally good, without examining

whether it be done with a right intention and in a proper spirit. Two persons may do the same thing; it may be a good deed in one and a bad deed in the other. If it be done in a careless manner, out of custom, pride, or any other vicious motive, it is bad; if it flow from a principle of faith in and love towards God, and charity towards one's neighbour, it is good; "whatever is not of faith is sin," however good it may be in appearance, Rom. xiv. 23.

Disciple.—I confess, to my shame, that while I consulted my own thoughts, I imagined, when I had performed any act externally good, that God could not fail to be more propitious to me than to others. Now, I have the happiness of seeing things in a different light. I acknowledge that my being, all I possess and all I do, are the pure and unmerited gifts of God; that I owe everything to his bounty; and though I were the rest of my days to live as holily as an angel, I could not acquit myself of my obligations to my heavenly Father, or merit the least of his favours. But what little I can, I do gladly; and if there be any good in my actions, it is grace alone bestows the thought, will, and power to do them.

Pastor.—The second disposition included in the grace of faith, is not to live *by ourselves* or *for ourselves*, but that *the Lord Jesus should live*.

and reign in us. Saint Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. We must here observe, that the second effect or production of faith, is the retracing of the image of Christ in our souls; that his life may be manifested in us. It is what St. Paul declares; "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh," 2 Cor. iv. 10. We have in the person of this blessed Saviour not only an all-sufficient Priest to reconcile us to the Father, but likewise a Prophet and King to instruct, guide, and govern us. He dwells in us by faith, and lives and works in us to will and to do. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," Col. ii. 6. The life of faith takes place of the preceding one, which is animal and carnal; and we can join with the Apostle in saying, it is not I that live.

My Lord's my portion night and day,
At every step to him I pray;
Holy Jesus dwell with me,
I cannot live without thee.

Accustomed to walk in his presence we are unable to do without him. Out of him we can neither will, do, nor undertake anything. What do I say? Out of him we are dead and incapable of doing any good. Deprived of the enjoyment

of his grace, we pine and faint, as a fish languishes and expires out of its element.

Once in communion with the Saviour and established in his grace, we renounce without difficulty our own will, our own glory, our own righteousness, and all confidence in ourselves. Considering that we do not live any longer for ourselves, we would do nothing without Christ, his permission, and commandment. We do not attribute anything to our own strength; all the good that is in and done by us, we ascribe to his all-powerful grace working in us. We not only cease to confide in ourselves, but we entirely mistrust our own hearts; like Luther, who said, he feared his own heart more than the Grand Turk. We even suspect our good intentions, and do not follow them until we have examined them by the light of God's holy word; knowing that the old man is dextrous in finding specious pretexts for gratifying himself. In short, we subscribe to the divine assertion, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5.

This beneficial mistrust of ourselves naturally leads us to abandon ourselves, without reserve, to the wise and faithful governance of the Lord. Whatever may be the object of our own choice, however good in appearance, becomes suspected by us. The natural man* pictures to himself a

* See 1 Cor. ii. 14.

fine plan of conversion; he thinks of bewailing his misery, and flatters himself as a matter of course that the Lord will draw nigh and inundate him with his consolations. This plan appears to be very good; but it is his own will that traces it and not the Lord's. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," John iii. 8. Who dare prescribe rules to the Holy Spirit, and subject his operations to a method concerted, not in the counsel of God but in the head of man? The child of God acts differently. He says, with Moses, "Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way; if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," Ex. xxxiii. 13—15. The Israelites marched only when the pillar of a cloud or fire announced the departure and shewed them their road; and they did not halt to encamp but at the place the pillar indicated to them. In fact, it appertains only to the head to animate and move its members. Add to which, the soul cannot be in a state of tranquillity, but when assured it is in the place where the Lord pleases. Thus, "not as we will Lord, but as thou wilt: let thy will be done, and not ours."

The Apostle, after saying "nevertheless I live," adds, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. We surrender ourselves entirely to the Lord Jesus, so that his Spirit becomes in us the principle,

of a new life. We are attentive to his inward impulses, and follow step by step his light, without cessation, looking unto Jesus, "as the eyes of servants look to their masters," Psalm cxxiii. 2. We undertake nothing; we do not combat without first, after the example of Abiathar,* putting on the ephod, and consulting the Lord with supplication, that he would incline our hearts to do his pleasure, 1 Sam. vii. 8. On his part, Jesus never fails to answer our prayers; he sheds upon us the unction of his Spirit, which "teacheth us of all things, and is truth," 1 John ii. 27; and which warns, directs, instructs, and makes known unto us the will of God. He is our living law, which we consult in our ignorance and doubts; our strength in weakness and infirmity. He speaks in us and

* It appears from the sacred history, that it was David and not Abiathar that put on the ephod. David makes use of the following expression to Abiathar: "I pray thee bring me hither the ephod," 1 Sam. xxx. 7; and in the following verse, it is said, "And David inquired at the Lord." Cruden observes on this portion, that the generality of commentators are of opinion, that neither David nor any of the Kings of Israel wore the ephod, in order to consult God of themselves, and that the passage signified no more than—*Put on the ephod and consult God for me.* He adds, however, that others maintained that the Jewish Kings had a right to wear the ephod, and to consult the Lord by Urim and Thummim. This opinion is grounded upon the 1 Samuel xxx. 8, referred to in this note, and seems to be sufficient authority to warrant this latter conclusion.

by us. When we pray, it is he who sighs and groans in us; when we carry our gift to the altar, it is he who perfumes with his much incense our supplications for ourselves and others. The oftener we attend upon prayer the more our confidence is increased; and as our faith becomes established, the more sweetness we find in our intercourse with God in prayer. How delightful it is to be able to say, "I have poured all my complaints into the bosom of Jesus, my best friend and faithful confidant; it is sufficient, he will provide." Then comes the Spirit of God, who sets to his seal and pronounces the consoling *Amen*. This is true experience, and will ever remain so!

The Lord Jesus lives in our hearts *when we have the same mind that was in him*. A heart wherein he dwells is *animated by his life, and created anew in his likeness*. We see in it the same humility, meekness, compassion, love, and disregard of the world and its vanities. Real Christians can say with truth, "we have known the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. ii. 16. When we see any one think, speak, and act like him, following his example and walking in his steps, we know by these outward evidences that he is a child of God, and that the Spirit of Christ dwells in his heart: such are the happy fruits of faith. Through it we not only receive pardon of sin, but are clothed with

the Lord Jesus, transformed into his image and disposed to live as he lived upon earth. This constant living in communion with him, produces in us an effect similar to that in a wife who tenderly loves her husband; she insensibly acquires his temper and manner of acting. And are not believers united to the Lord Jesus, as a wife is to her husband? Does not the Apostle insinuate as much, when he says, "Christ liveth in me?" that is to say, he is the soul and life of my soul. There is as great a difference between what I was before my conversion and what I now am, as between a living and a dead person. Who can describe the blessing of this intimate communion of a faithful heart with its Saviour! How fruitful a source of grace, strength, light, and every spiritual good!

When Jesus Christ dwells in us by faith, we have the same mind as he had respecting our heavenly Father. God is our gracious Father in his well-beloved Son. The assurance of his tender love towards us causes us to walk, like Enoch, before his eyes and in his presence all the days of our life. Though we do not see him, we love him; and if we fear him, it is not a servile but a filial fear, mixed with love and joy, which encourages and inspires us with confidence to approach unto him and call him *Abba*, that is, Father. In fact, being beloved children of the best of Fathers, and

having the happiness of being adopted into his family, the Spirit of Christ inspires us with feelings of love, peace, kindness, and a desire of being serviceable to all his children, who are our brethren, though they be the weakest members of Christ. It is Christ we see in them, being members of his body. Our communion with them causes us to participate, by a kind of sympathy, in all that happens to them, prosperous or adverse. Their pleasures are our pleasures, their sorrows are our sorrows. Members of one and the same spiritual body, we possess the same mind, speak the same language, and regard each other as citizens of the same country, as heirs of the same salvation.

It is Jesus living in us that, moreover, gives us the same dispositions towards our enemies which he manifested towards his. When we consider them as persons in their state of natural blindness, and under the dominion of covetousness, our hearts are touched with compassion toward them; we wish them well, pray for them, and do them all the service in our power. The respect we entertain for the precious blood of Christ, causes us to set a value upon their souls. We say, "There is a soul for which Christ may have died, perhaps he loves it, and may one day make it the reward of his sufferings, a trophy of his cross, an amiable child of God." Under the influence of such considerations,

we are enabled to love it, and there is nothing we would not do to reclaim and guide it into the way of truth. Should the thought occur that such an one is a wicked person, a slave of Satan, &c., we are not discouraged on that account, remembering that the Saviour has conquered Satan and this evil world. He who dwells in, and has delivered us from the power of the enemy, is stronger than the prince of this world. Rest content, and leave them that are without to that God, whose patience is abundant and whose mercy is infinite.

Of all the conditions we may be the subject of, there is none in which the life of faith is more profitable than in that of suffering. The cross, borne in the spirit of humility and patience, of which the Saviour has shewn us an example, is a source of blessing to us. By faith in him we find the perseverance, resignation, and confidence we stand in need of, in order to the possessing of our souls in patience. It enables us to receive calamities as coming from the Lord, which we consider not as evils but as covenant blessings; as the best means of advancing our salvation; as dispensations wisely ordered and mercifully designed for the exercise and strengthening of our faith, to the end that our graces may be established and increased.

Another advantage faith procures us, is the raising of our affections above terrestrial things.

The objects that faith apprehends are spiritual and celestial. While here below we walk as citizens of heaven, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 20. Those who have chosen heaven for their portion, are more occupied with it than everything besides. They are there already in spirit; "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. vi. 21. Sometimes we prostrate ourselves in adoration before him, who has merited for us so great salvation. At another, we rejoice in having part in this glorious heritage. Sometimes we compare the felicity we already enjoy, and that we expect, with what is called happiness in this world, and we determine that the enjoyments of worldly men are not worthy to be compared with ours. At other times we are transported in spirit before the throne of the Divine Majesty, and contemplate the Lord Jesus, seated on the right hand of the Father, surrounded by an innumerable host of holy angels; and filled with sacred ardour, like persons impatient to return to their country, we exclaim with the Apostle, we "desire to depart and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. In this blessed anticipation this transitory life is little esteemed by us; we do not enter into great projects to acquire wealth or honour, but endeavour to employ our time to a better account. If we happen to have interests mingled with those

of worldly persons, we had rather relinquish the advantage, and suffer them to do us wrong, than rigourously contend with them. In some respects we owe to them this forbearance in worldly matters, because they are their portion: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," Luke xvi. 25. Are we the possessors of temporal goods? We use them as not possessing them. Our hearts not being devoted to them, we can at any instant give them up without regret, because we have a better inheritance. As to such as are resolved to assert their rights to the utmost, who will not suffer wrong, and desire to be as rich, and more so, than others, we declare to them that they have neither the mind of Christ nor of his Apostle, Phil. iii.

Faith, likewise, exerts its influence over our employments; we work with diligence and fidelity as under the eye of the Lord, looking to him to crown our labours with success. If we gain little, he gives us to rest satisfied with the most moderate profits. And if we cannot foresee supplies proportionate to our future wants, we leave them to his faithful providence. The infinitely wise and good God, we say, has fed and clothed us, while we were his enemies, and will not abandon us now, when through grace we have become his children. Our good Shepherd acts towards us, as the poor

man mentioned in the holy writ, did by his ewe lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 3.

Such being the state of mind of those who live by faith of the Son of God, they are preserved from temptations to avarice, mistrust, the corroding cares of this life, pride, and vain glory. All their thoughts, desires, prospects, affections, words, and actions, proceed from faith as their source. Whatever does not flow from thence they renounce. All they read, see, and hear, is turned to a profitable account; every thing concurs to their benefit. It is true, the manner in which the children of God live, as well as the happiness they enjoy, are unknown to the world, because their "life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3; but all will be made plain in the great day of manifestation; then they will appear in the image of the Lord Jesus.

Disciple.—What ineffable felicity thus to live in the faith of the Son of God, and to be more and more confirmed in it! May our good God grant us grace to die unto sin, through love of Jesus, that one day "his life also may be manifest in our mortal flesh," 2 Cor. iv. 11. But, Sir, have the goodness to say something concerning the happy end of the children of God.

Pastor.—One may assert, of a child of God what the Disciples formerly said of Saint John: he shall not die, John xxi. 23. No, the believer

does not die. Nothing dies in him but the life of Adam—the natural life. As to the life of Christ which is in him, it is not susceptible of death ; it is eternal. This life which is hid in God, will be manifested in glory. A child of God dies every day to himself, the world, and his lusts. Throughout life, to his last moment, he makes fresh discoveries of his failings and his miseries. He accuses himself with them, and humbles himself before God on account of them ; but at the same time he has recourse to the fountain of grace, the merits of his Saviour, by continual sighs and prayers. Full of confidence in the fidelity of his Redeemer, he surrenders himself to his guidance and gives up all to his will, persuaded, his best interests being in such good hands, he cannot fail of being eternally happy. Does he behold the hour of his departure approaching ? He goes as a poor sinner, washes his garments, and plunges his body and soul in the blood of the Lamb. By faith he lays hold of the mantle of righteousness, the wedding garment prepared for him ; and thus, clothed upon with Christ, he gladly consents to leave his body to death, to be deposited in the earth. His bed of sickness is a triumphal car, on which he waits till his celestial Bridegroom gives to his soul the signal to depart, and the angels transport it into his bosom.

If I have anything to recommend to persons in such circumstances, it is meditation upon the sufferings of the Son of God, and the consideration of his infinite love for sinful men. That they should raise their eyes in faith, to the heart of Jesus, and behold there how great his love has been towards them from eternity; that they may read the decree of their election in his pierced hands and side, and there learn what return they ought to make for what he has done and suffered for them. Let them recall to mind all the steps he has taken, and the means he has employed to draw them to himself, to gain their hearts, to bring them to the knowledge of his salvation and the enjoyment of his grace. Let nothing cause them to doubt of the great salvation the good Saviour has accomplished for them by his meritorious death, nor of his faithfulness to perform to them his promises at a moment when, above all, his support and consolations are most necessary. In fine, in the midst of weakness, in the decay of nature, let them stay themselves by faith upon this immoveable foundation: "Jesus has loved and redeemed me, he has given himself for me. I am and will be his."

While the children of God thus cleave to and embrace the author of their salvation, his Spirit never fails to strengthen and console them. He

manifests to them the glory reserved for them, and the felicity they have not merited, but which Jesus has acquired and destined for them, as the termination of their sufferings and the end of their faith. They can then rejoice in having been happily brought, by the aid of their God and Saviour, to the close of their career. Their heart is consoled and cheered, because their deliverance draweth nigh; and soon they are to be entirely and for ever freed from all danger, all misery, and all sin.

Disciple.—Ah, what joy and felicity to be thus delivered from so many evils, and transported into the mansions of perfect repose and eternal peace!

Pastor.—Yes, assuredly; it is ineffable happiness to a soul that can appreciate true benefits. It is not only liberated from sin and all the miseries of this life, and every fear for the future, but what is more, it is put into possession of all that is most amiable and delightful in eternity. Have you ever beheld the coronation of a king, or the marriage of a great prince? Can your imagination paint what any one feels in the midst of the most lively pleasures, which charm every sense and inundate the mind with joy inexpressible? Well, all this is but vanity, when compared with the grandeur and delight of heavenly bliss. You know what the heart experiences at beholding a faithful friend, a

tender husband, a beloved child, after a long absence. Figure to yourself what must be the transport of a soul, admitted into the beatific vision of its great Friend, of Jesus its heavenly and eternal Bridegroom. Those who have experienced the foretaste of this felicity, can alone form any idea of it. Who can conceive the delightful repose and peace to be enjoyed in the bosom of God; the beauty and magnificence which surround his throne; the plenitude of joy and bliss his presence diffuses throughout the soul? What more charming than the conversations we shall hold with the holy angels; with all the children of God that have lived upon earth since the creation of the world; with our brethren, our relatives, and beloved friends. How many things will they have to relate to us, while we recount to them the goodness of the Lord to us, and they likewise communicate to us by what admirable means he has conducted them to that blessed place. We shall exclaim: Behold now the acceptable time! Behold the great day of salvation! Behold that glory and beatitude, which, while we sojourned in the vale of tears, was the subject of our discourses and hymns, the object of our vows and desires! What we now witness, what we now enjoy and experience, infinitely surpasses what we then could think or express of it. But the most ravishing of all to our souls will be

the first gracious look the Son of God, our dear and adorable Friend, will deign to cast upon us, and the transporting privilege of being able to contemplate him eternally, whom we have believed and loved. What ecstasy to hear him pronounce, with a joyful countenance, when opening to us the gates of his kingdom of glory, this rapturous welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34 O that it would please God, that all men might believe and aspire after it!

But it is enough ; soon the Lord who hears us will come and call us. Let us be ready, having "our loins girded about" and "our lights burning."

Disciple.—Let the beloved Bridegroom of my soul come when he pleases. My heart languishes to kiss his pierced hands and feet ; and already says, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Amen.

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